



INVISIBLES

They are not around as much anymore as they used to be. In the height of the crisis and rebellions they were always arriving, one after another, some staying for a short time, some for longer. Often a friend of a friend, or some old connection. As internationals we would often host them and hang out with them, but many Greeks did this also. Of course some of them are Greek as well. Many have become good friends if they weren't already, and they wrote interesting things as far as I know. Or did they? They came to see and analyse, to study and report. Many have been involved in political struggles back where they came from and wanted to show a different image of revolt and crisis. They assure us that they are on our side and respect our concerns and limits and perhaps this is true. With some hesitation we allow them to exist amongst us and yet in some way they remain invisible—like the anonymous person behind the camera of a group photo. They are not all the same, but they are similar in their absence from analysis and definition. We get very little from

them, yet their whole existence is dependant on subject matters and situations which sometimes mean us and our lives.

Academics and journalists are elusive creatures but what an interesting subject matter they are.

The journalist: most Greeks hate the media and with good cause. Many stories indicate that journalistic integrity is not big in this country—to say the least. However, even though an anarchist aversion towards mainstream media is valid it is not the case that the media is the same everywhere. In many countries sympathetic journalists have exposed police brutality and murders, police infiltration, evidence manipulation in political trials, fascists and their fascist deeds, the conditions at immigration detention centres etc, whilst sometimes also giving a voice to radical movements and initiatives. In some places, state subsidies towards various forms of media mean that cooperative newspapers can be founded and function financially with the ambition of challenging the standard news flow and inserting

alternative views and stories into the media landscape. Amongst these journalists one can find both sympathetic socialists and experienced anarchists.

If we take the example of Greece, the telling of alternative stories of the realities here is something which we should consider being sympathetic towards due to the way the crisis is reported in other countries. We might consider their invitation to not only provide a sympathetic representation of struggles and realities here, but also as a kind of anti-nationalist counter information in the countries where these articles are published. This is because the Greek, and Southern European crisis in general, works as a comfortable subject upon which to build a hidden form of nationalism. Especially in Germany, but not only, the crisis has worked as a way to divide people into good and bad. The responsible, hard working German is a positive opposite to the Greek stereotype: lazy, greedy, selfish, irresponsible. It's enough for the German to feel a little bit of that famous pride which has so unfortunately had to



be repressed (though it seems to be reappearing in various new and reinvented forms in the last years). The bad Greek makes the German feel nice and smug in blankets of national comfort, but without being a racist of course. A simplistic and sensationalist mainstream media representation works to bring national unity and prepares the good Northern European worker to handle coming austerity measures with the enthusiastic responsibility so lacking in the weak character of the southerners.

This backdoor nationalism works for all the Northern Europeans, it is not my intention to simplify this into some Greek versus German nonsense which equally strengthens Greek nationalism in the form of victimisation which is easily used by all sides, including the broad left. The German media has been famously simplistic in its reporting, though the same discourse has existed throughout the north. Sympathetic journalists can counter this discourse by focusing on the real complexities of the euro and European Union projects whilst also criticising mainstream media

reporting. So it is possible to imagine and also give examples of journalists as something beyond a pure negative or as the slogan goes “where the cops batons don’t reach, the journalists do”.

So the journalist is not by default a pure negative and though most suggest a total rejection of mainstream media, at least internationally, it might not be as simple. But who are they then? Some are careerists and they might want to focus on something a bit unusual or alternative or whatever and this might make sense. But the other one might be a comrade, or ex-comrade, or ally. The truth is that radicals and anarchists in other countries are journalists, as they even are here though possibly with less autonomy and power over their own product. So, there is a radical subject which avoids focus, appearing only as a name at the end of newspaper articles. Who are they? What is their age group, their class & ethnic backgrounds, what are their visions? How do they work? What is their analysis of the media and how do they organise against dominant powers and discourses within it? How do they balance their journalistic ideals and ambitions with the financial

needs and possible state dependence of their publications? Can we really trust them and how do they assure us of this? A fascinating enquiry, has it ever manifested itself in reports? Or is it a case for another group of invisibles?

The academic: It is not my intention here to glorify the journalist against the academic, but one has to wonder, what does the academic really do? The journalist reports, for better or worse, we know the product. The academic exists on various levels. The low level academic is probably doing a masters or bachelor degree, possibly to avoid working, and chooses to write about crisis and cultures of resistance due to interest and involvement- maybe they are not even really academics but rather students. The Phd student or post-doc researcher is not just in this for a temporary relief from the normal work or unemployment benefit scenarios the world offers. The professional academic is working and building a career. If not immediately problematic, the academic certainly poses a threat to a certain degree, not only in terms of representation but also of how they might shape radical milieus. The obvious scepticism is

that not many people read academic papers. Mostly the readers are other academics, but of course the state and its security forces have an interest and the information presented is right there as a contribution and insight into groups and thoughts which are in conflict with the interests of the status quo. If a paper is successful then it usually becomes a part of the university's library and records and may very well be published and therefore is available for all who wish to read it.

The other aspect is that the sympathetic academic who is having some success within the academic world relies on funding. Funding is connected to proposing a certain theory about the world and continuously being able to create papers according to these assumptions. If an academic is connected to social movements and gets

funding related to a certain perspective, does s/he not then have an interest to make things fit into that perspective, rather than freely and openly analyse and

propose? The academic's job is on the line. Their rent and bills depend on things being a certain way, the way which s/he has proposed they are. So does the academic then influence the discourses of social movements to fit into their theories? As this is their job, they can travel to all meetings, hang out with several kinds of groups and it is all work. This academic comrade might have a genuine interest in whatever s/he is involved in, but as an invisible subject, who is analysing how economic and social factors influence their positions? Certainly these are valid points which are not new to academics themselves, these problems must have been dealt with for a long time by now. One would expect great works on the role of academics, the traps for the radicals and the conflicts of their very existence within capitalist society. How do the academics position themselves within their work place, dependency on a salary, the relationship with the State and the way in which they themselves may be influenced in their ambitions by the dependencies they still have? Are the academics out there organising together as a force?

This little piece of writing is in no way an attempt to support or attack the groups here identified, even though it may come across as either one or the other. Similar to the racists' excuse, let me state that many of my friends are academics and journalists. The only intention is to point out that these subjects exist, and that from an academic or a journalistic perspective, they are almost never in the spotlight, at least not as categories of subjects. A total dismissal of these forces as enemies feels like some anti-intellectual totalitarian communist crap. An

anarchist critique might suggest instead that knowledge and information should be freed from the constraints of capitalist institutions such as the media industry and academia. However, these individuals do exist, as a category of invisible subjects. It is easy to point out that journalists and academics can be a danger by exposing practices and structures amongst groups opposed to the state in general and various specific capitalist projects. That they are trapped within the capitalist constraints of their professions whilst often presenting themselves as somehow neutral and even sympathetic, avoiding analysis even though analysing is exactly what they do. These subjects actually commodify themselves, making themselves into products on the market of knowledge and storytelling and like all producers they want their products, which is also them, to gain maximum value. This means that they are shaped by the constraints and possibilities of the environments where they can exist. As one of the worlds most successful radical academics has stated:

"The whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don't know how to be submissive, and so on – because they're dysfunctional to the institutions."

-Noam Chomsky

-Coraline