

Nicolas Casaux, Transphobe, Is Lying To You

Peter Gelderloos

2019

Shortly before embarking on my recent [2019] trip to France to present the translations to my books, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* and *The Failure of Nonviolence*, I received some distressing news. The translator of the first of these books for Editions Libre (there is also another, collective translation), Nicolas Casaux, had published transphobic articles, and together with people from Editions Libre, had founded an offshoot of Deep Green Resistance [ed. – see *What is Insurgency?*] in France. DGR in the US is known for its transphobic as well as authoritarian positions, and all the anarchists and other anticapitalists I know refuse to have anything to do with the group. This includes people for whom the struggle against ecocide or industrial civilization is their primary struggle.

I was able to talk with people from Editions Libre in Paris and I felt they listened to my criticisms. I was happy to learn that Editions Libre does not hold a transphobic position, that DGR in France is trans-inclusive and acknowledges the oppression of transgender people, that they were releasing a statement clarifying that position, and that Nicolas Casaux had left the organization.

Though I feel satisfied with the response by Editions Libre, I also know that I don't speak for anyone else, and everyone has to make up their own mind.

I do still feel the need to address the position espoused by Nicolas Casaux. I will be dealing particularly with the following article: consciencesansobjet.blogspot.com/2017/12/les-enfants-transgenres-et-quelques.html

In this article, Casaux starts by summarizing how industrial civilization is destroying the planet and exploiting all life, human and otherwise. This is a view I share wholeheartedly, though of course I tend to express myself in different terms. Then Casaux makes an astounding leap. Who is the technological vanguard of the State's war against the planet and all its inhabitants (a war, I might add, that has been going on for thousands of years)? Queer and transgender people, he argues, saying "the political and corporatist leaders of industrial civilization found a ally and an asset in the trans and queer current" who will help them "in order to achieve their assumed goal of liquidation of the human race".

There is so much wrong with this statement, it's going to take some time to unpack. Let's start with Casaux's horrendous view of queer and transgender people. Both in the title and in the paragraph I have quoted, Casaux attempts to conflate "transgender" with "transhumanist." This is a manipulation. Though there are transgender transhumanists, the two words don't necessarily have anything to do with one another, except for the prefix they share. Transgender is not a "current." It is simply a very broad, imprecise, and imperfect word describing the tens of millions of people on this planet who do not accept the gender they were assigned at birth, or who cannot be defined within a binary or biological definition of gender. Gender is a social construct, and in the West, a binary one. The meaning attached to a gender changes from one culture to another, and from one decade to the next. A huge number of babies every year are given operations, obviously without their consent, to make them fit better into one of the two supposedly "natural" gender categories. Many of the non-industrial cultures that Casaux supposedly admires includes a place for two-spirit and other non-binary individuals, or officially recognizes and legitimizes people who transition from one gender to another, while others don't assign gender until after puberty. Archaeologi-

cal evidence exists that multiple non-city-based and non-industrial societies practiced sex reassignment surgery, just like they practiced dentistry.

Casaux doesn't recognize any of this. The only medical intervention he worries about, puberty blockers, is consensual and relatively benign in terms of harmful effects (more on this later). He doesn't dedicate a single word to the non-consensual mutilation of infants carried out in every maternity ward in the West just to uphold his supposedly natural view of gender, nor does he recognize the gender diversity of the non-Western cultures he idealizes in a tokenistic, borderline racist way. His ideas on gender do not reflect a well developed critique of industrial civilization; on the contrary, they reflect the essentialist biologist discourses of the 19th century.

There are myriad trans identities and expressions, and only a very small number of these are being assimilated in Western capitalist countries. On the whole, trans people face extremely high rates of violent assault, harassment, murder, and economic and cultural exclusion [ed. – see RIP Taylor].

Neither is there any justification for claiming trans people have a special affinity with a technological capitalist vanguard. Trans people have been a part of every important movement and social struggle, including the struggle against the destruction of the planet. In the US, one of the longest serving anarchist prisoners, Marius Mason [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg70], is a trans man convicted for multiple arson attacks against the very kind of genetic research laboratories Casaux claims that trans people support. Marius risked his freedom fighting for the earth and all its people, and he underwent his gender transition while immersed in the violence of the US prison system [ed. – *Marius recently secured his long-fought-for transfer to a men's prison, likely being the first trans man to achieve such a transfer in the US federal prison system*]. He exemplifies a level of bravery and principles Casaux cannot even imagine.

Casaux is equally ignorant when it comes to the meaning of "queer". There is not a single, homogeneous queer current, and if there were, it absolutely would not be an ally of the political and corporate power structures. Historically and today, queer struggles have opposed the assimilation of Othered sexualities. In the US, one of the most vocal radical queer publications of the last decade, *Baedan* [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg35], is fully anticapitalist, energetically anti-assimilationist and anti-civ, and critical of technology and transhumanism. A later queer publication, *Otherworlds Review* [ed. – see *Ghosts*], is – to put it briefly – largely dedicated to nature worship. And where I live now, in Catalunya, queer and trans people form a major and autonomous current within the "neo-rural" movement of people who are developing more ecocentric ways of living, often recovering traditional agricultural practices, in the countryside.

Nicolas Casaux either has NO IDEA what he is talking about (yet nonetheless felt entitled to pass judgment on a huge group of people), or he is deliberately trying to manipulate his readers.

As with most transphobes, Casaux adheres to an essentialist view of nature and bodies (referring, for example, to "the essential realities of the human body"). As described in *The Unquiet Dead*, essentialism in both of these forms was a key component of fascism and especially of the *Volkisch* movement that evolved into Nazism; body and nature essential-

ism have also tended to be features of racist and transphobic versions of feminism, such as that of Mary Daly, whereas anti-racist and anti-colonial feminism has tended to problematize or completely reject essentialist views of the body. Surely we can all think of more alarming aspects of fascism than essentialism, but the fact that Casaux also uses some of the same argumentative structures of the far Right – and shares their transphobia – makes his essentialism more worrisome. And beyond Casaux, there is the question of who might use his misplaced arguments, given how European fascists have long been recruiting in environmentalist circles [ed. – see *On the Reactionary Drift of Some “Comrades”*...].

Casaux provides only one single example of an evil transgender CEO – Martine Rothblatt, who clones pigs and advocates eugenics – to support his ridiculous conspiracy theory that “the transgender and queer current” is an important ally of “the political and corporatist leaders of industrial civilization”. In order to give added weight to his lone example, lest readers suspect he is making a sweeping generalization on the basis of the smallest possible amount of evidence, Casaux claims that Rothblatt was the highest paid female CEO (according to figures from 2013 included in an article from 2014).

It took me thirty-five seconds to discover that it was a fluke. Rothblatt had never held this position before and has not held it since. Marissa Meyer, chief executive of Yahoo!, was the highest paid female CEO in 2014, making \$42 million, almost 10 million more than Rothblatt. Three of the five highest paid CEOs work in the tech sector. Martine is the only transgender one, and SHE (not “he,” asshole) was only the 24th overall highest paid CEO (men and women combined). Suddenly, Casaux’s evidence doesn’t seem so significant anymore. Which is probably tried to make Rothblatt more important than she is, hoping to manipulate readers into believing there was actually a substantial connection between transgender people and capitalism’s evil plans for the future.

If we look at the top ten highest-paid CEOs in 2013 or 2014, we find that all of them are men, none of them are trans or openly identify as queer. In 2013, 3 lead media, entertainment and telecommunications companies, 1 runs an investment company, 1 runs a rail company, 5 run tech and medical companies, including number one Elon Musk [ed. – see ‘*Let’s Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!*’], a much larger transhumanist than Rothblatt, and a heterosexual cis-man... In 2014, 4 run media and telecommunications companies, 2 investment companies and 4 technology companies. In other words, the tech field is highly represented, and it’s not being led by any trans or queer conspiracies. What about the pharmaceutical and medical industries? There are in fact three such companies higher on the list than Martine Rothblatt’s United Therapeutics. But in fact, how much money a CEO makes is not the best measure for how important a corporation is. Let’s look at the ten biggest pharmaceutical companies in the world. Nope, United Therapeutics isn’t on the list, and none of the Top 10 have transgender or openly queer executives (nor do any of the Top 10 tech companies). In fact, I couldn’t find United Therapeutics on any list of big pharmaceutical companies. Number 25, Labcorp, made over \$11 billion in revenue in 2018, whereas United Therapeutics didn’t even make \$390 million. It turns out, it’s not an important company.

In other words, what Nicolas Casaux did was to take a random transgender person who makes a lot of money directing a relatively obscure company, and turn her into a bogeyman and the symbol of a vast and nefarious conspiracy. Antisemites use the exact same pseudo-

logical structure when they take one rich Jewish person and turn them into an example for all Jewish people. It doesn't work at all if your audience is interested in logical arguments: it only works if they are willing to believe anything that justifies their hate and fear.

Let me give you a comparison to Casaux's quality of reasoning: "French people are neoliberal assholes conspiring to take away everybody's unemployment benefits and health-care! Can anyone forget the example of Emmanuel Macron?" Or, "People named Nicolas are manipulative liars! Who doesn't remember the example of Nicolas Casaux?" Casaux hopes his readers forget that there are hundreds of millions of transgender and queer people, they don't have any one ideology, and they are just as diverse as any other group of people. He is relying on a fear of the Other to portray transgender and queer people as a homogeneous group that poses a threat to nature.

Attacking trans and queer people is an affront to solidarity in our movements against capitalism and patriarchy, it is a way of directing more violence against some of the people in society who are already the most marginalized, the most likely to be assaulted or murdered in the streets, it is stupid, it is unjustifiable, and it makes us weaker. Transphobia and homophobia, just like racism, are weapons of capitalism and the State.

Finally, I want to address the titular topic of Casaux's article, medical interventions for transgender youth. Casaux doesn't actually talk about this issue, he just links to a documentary he claims to have been suppressed by the "transgender lobby," once again copying far Right tactics by pretending a highly marginalized group somehow controls the media.

The issue of gender reassignment surgery, hormones, puberty blockers, and other medical interventions for trans people is much more complex than Casaux suggests. There are trans people who celebrate these interventions, who are favorable to some of them and critical to others, and there are those who experience them as violence. Many trans people undergo surgery to avoid the far greater violence that cis people unleash on them in public places, to be able to "pass," to be able to get jobs, to avoid harassment. One trans friend told me he was very sad to get a mastectomy, he liked his breasts, but the surgery was easy compared to the looks and comments he got every time he went to the beach or the swimming pool and took his shirt off. This is a violence that people like Casaux only contribute to with their ignorant remarks.

It is obvious that Casaux and people like him don't give a shit about trans people or the violence they face. Why are they concerned about trans adolescents getting puberty blockers? They aren't. They just use the topic because it can be an effective way to generate disapproval of trans people more generally. They present us with defenseless, helpless children, taken advantage of by older trans ideologues (implicitly affixed with the older homophobic stigma of perversion) and a mercenary medical establishment.

I am no friend of the medical establishment, but I will say that there is a great deal of misinformation circulating on the web about puberty blockers and other procedures (generally spread by people with right-wing ideologies). The procedure is misrepresented – for example, puberty blockers are called "hormones" even though they are not – and the danger is exaggerated, while trans people are denied any agency or victimhood, they are only presented as victims or victimizers.

I remember what it was like being an adolescent. At that age, no one was better qualified to make decisions about my body or my gender identity. Only an authoritarian could deny the physical autonomy of adolescents. Life doesn't start at 18, when the State grants us the legal rights of adulthood. We have to make decisions regarding our bodies before then, and no one should be able to take those decisions away from us.

I won't enter further into this debate, because the medical options of trans people should not be decided by cis people. My goal is to show that Casaux's position does not have the least bit of legitimacy. When someone expresses opinions regarding that which they can never personally experience, they are speaking from ignorance. When it is someone in a position of social power or normality speaking about those who are marginalized by society, that ignorance is also an exercise of authoritarianism, and when the opinion being expressed seeks to limit the activity or spread negative generalizations about that marginalized group, then we are dealing with an act of oppression.

Let us conclude with what has become obvious: Casaux knows nothing about trans people, Casaux doesn't care at all about trans people, Casaux is spreading false and hurtful things about trans people. He needs to shut up and listen to the people he is trying to marginalize. Maybe he will learn something, but in any case, his silence will be a favor to us all, because the only thing coming out of his mouth is shit.

Sincerely,

Peter Gelderloos

find each other.



Peter Gelderloos
Nicolas Casaux, Transphobe, Is Lying To You
2019

English version first published in Return Fire vol.6 chap.4 (summer 2022). To read the articles referenced throughout this text in [square brackets], PDFs of Return Fire and related publications can be read, downloaded and printed by visiting returnfire.noblogs.org or emailing returnfire@riseup.net

lib.edist.ro