

# Why An Anarchist Review of Books?

Fifth Estate Collective

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

This famous quote from Charles Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities* probably can be applied to any era, but which it is depends upon where you are situated at a given time.

Most of us, though, might find it difficult to locate the best at this moment as we face a pandemic, an increasing climate crisis, and a rising fascist movement among other contemporary disasters.

It’s as if every radical critique of capitalism and industrial society has come true at once. In an earlier period, there were great movements contesting the artificial world of things and power, ones that demanded the re-ordering of how life on the planet was lived, that sought to dismantle hierarchy and artifice.

The vision of the Ideal, as the Spanish and Italian comrades spoke of a future anarchist society of peace and harmony, has receded to the point of being a dream held only by a handful.

Is total defeat of the possibility of a new world at hand? Only if we allow it. We are the inheritors of the ideas and vision of the people and movements that came before us. Those histories and concepts are contained in memory and in exploration in the books reviewed in this issue. Rather than a retreat from the real world into one of literature, it is arming us for what lies ahead.

In previous issues, our Anarchist Review of Books sections begin with the statement, “Ideas without action is passivity. Action without ideas leads nowhere.”

It’s on us. Now.

# fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/410-fall-2021/why-an-anarchist-review-of-books>  
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