

Introduction

GLOBAL PHENOMENA OF RESISTANCE TO ENCLOSURES have been led by the Zapatistas in Mexico (1994), the antiglobalizers of intellectual property at the “battle of Seattle” (1999), the women of the Via Campesino against the corporate seizure of the planetary germplasm, the shack dwellers from Durban to Cape Town, the women of the Niger River delta protesting naked against the oil spillers, the indigenous peoples of the Andes Mountains against the water takers, the seed preservers of Bangladesh, the tree huggers of the Himalayas, the movement of “the circles and the squares” in the hundreds of municipal Occupys (2011), and the thousands of water protectors at Standing Rock (2017). Inspired by these phenomena, revisions of the meaning of “the commons,” and its relationship to communism, socialism, anarchism, and utopianism, have become part of the worldwide discourse against the effort to shut it down or enclose it. In general the story is a couple hundred years old.

In 1793, William Blake, the London artist, poet, and prophet, came to the conclusion that Enclosure = Death. Two of his contemporaries decided to do something about it. This book tells a love story between an Irishman and an African American woman, Ned and Kate, two revolutionaries, who yearned for another world and tried to bring it about. Their love for each other and their longing for the commons point us to a new world and a new heart.

This is what Blake wrote:

They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up,
And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle,
And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round globe hot burning
Till all from life I was obliterated and erased.¹

¹ *Visions of the Daughters*, 196.

Blake had the prophetic power to imagine a different world, and a different heart. That single phrase, “a red round globe hot burning,” might refer to the war between England and France, or to the struggle for freedom among the Haitian slaves, or to the fires making steam for the new engines of the time—war, revolution, and work—but it is even deeper than that. It concerns the planet itself. Blake’s geology anticipates the planetary Anthropocene, the “red round globe hot burning.” As for the five senses that close up his heart and brain, they refer to the dominant philosophy of the time—secular, empirical, utilitarian—and the resulting political economy. How else might knowledge be obtained?

Edward Marcus Despard and Catharine Despard were comrades seeking to change the world of enclosure and exploitation. For their pains, he was hanged and beheaded in February 1803 in England, while she escaped to Ireland. Colonel Edward Marcus Despard, an Anglo-Irish imperialist who became an Irish freedom fighter, was called Ned as a child.² Since I am writing a kind of family history, I call him Ned to make him more familiar. His wife, Catherine, the “poor black woman, who called herself his wife,” I treat with similar familiarity. Hence, Kate.

The overall arc of their story is consonant with the three parts of this book. It begins with my search for Ned and Kate and for the commons (“The Quest”), which in turn led me to what the poet William Blake called the “Atlantic Mountains.” Their American experiences beyond and beneath the seas are described in the second part of this book. When they returned to England from the Caribbean in the year 1790, the French Revolution had already begun and the signs of the commons—*liberté, égalité, and fraternité*—had set fire to the epoch, a second meaning of “red round globe hot burning.” The third part of this book, “Love and Struggle,” shows how Ned and Kate’s love for each other expressed itself through resistance to the English advocacy of King, God, and Property to justify wars against equality and wars of imperial conquest.

War between France and England began in 1793 and did not conclude until 1815. There is a story of possible republics—France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Haiti, and the United States—but each fell short of equality or of any real notion of commonwealth. France became an empire under Napoleon. England became an empire as the United Kingdom. One island disappeared as an independent polity (Ireland), while another’s independence actually

2. E. Despard, “Recollections,” 22. See also J. Despard, “Memoranda.”

began to appear (Haiti). The United States consolidated itself as a white, settler-property regime with Jefferson's election (1800) and more than tripled its size with the Louisiana Purchase (1803).

The North American continent was taken, surveyed into squares, and sold.³ In England, thousands of individual parliamentary acts of enclosure closed the country, parish by parish. The United States (1789) and the United Kingdom (1801) were new political entities devoted to the enclosure of the commons. They became deeply entangled as plantation production shifted from Caribbean sugar to mainland cotton, destroying cotton production in India and the Ottoman Empire. Cotton imports rose from £32 million in 1798 to £60,500,000 in 1802, while the value of exported English manufactures went from £2 million in 1792 to £7,800,000 in 1802.⁴ Edmund Cartwright's steam-powered loom was adopted in 1801. Eli Whitney's cotton gin was at work by 1793, and cotton production had tripled by 1800. It was the machine, particularly the steam engine and the cotton gin, that economically connected the other two structures, Enclosure and Slavery. The Ship connected them geographically.⁵

Enclosure refers to *land*, where most people worked. Its enclosure was their loss. No longer able to subsist on land, people were dispossessed, and in a literal painful way they became rootless. Arnold Toynbee, the originator of the phrase "industrial revolution," in his lectures of 1888 showed that it was preceded by the enclosures of the commons. Karl Marx understood this, making it the theme of the origin of capitalism.

Besides land, enclosure may refer to the *hand*. Handicrafts and manufactures were enclosed into factories, where entrance and egress were closely watched, and women and children replaced adult men. Allied with enclosure in the factory was the enclosure of punishment in the *prison* or penitentiary.

Besides land, hand, and prison, enclosure may refer to the *sea*. Those who have read Marcus Rediker's book *The Slave Ship* or have acquainted themselves with the infamous "Middle Passage" by reading early abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson or Olaudah Equiano, or by visiting the museums in Detroit; Washington, DC; Liverpool; or Elmina that are devoted to the African American experience, will at once be overcome by the stench, cruelty, claustrophobia, and attempted dehumanization enclosed within "the wooden walls."

3. Linklater, *Measuring America*.

4. Mantoux, *Industrial Revolution*, 252.

5. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*; Baptist, *Half*; Frykman, "Wooden World."

For Marx, capitalism's "original sin" was written "in letters of blood and fire." The dwellings of Armagh, the slave quarters of the Caribbean plantations, the longhouses of the Iroquois, the giant prison of Newgate, and the Albion mill in London were set on fire. Coal replaced wood as fuel for fires, the fires burned to produce steam, and the steam-powered machines spelled the ruin of a whole mode of life. This occurred during war, when the ground of Europe was drenched in blood, and the blood of the chained bodies of the slaves colored the Atlantic crimson. The blood has not ceased to flow nor the fire to burn, red round globe hot burning.

Actually there was one year of peace, when the guns fell silent, the Peace of Amiens between 1802 and 1803. This was decisive to Despard's insurrectionary attempt. Napoleon consolidated his dictatorship, uniting church and state. Jacques-Louis David in 1802 painted the first consul, soon to be emperor, crossing the Alps, clothed in a billowing scarlet cape trimmed with gold and mounted on a rearing white steed. It was the picture of empire expressing its pompous grandiosity of domination. (Actually, he crossed on a mule!) In the same year, just as Despard and his forty companions at the Oakley Arms were arrested, Beethoven published his piano fantasia the *Moonlight Sonata*, whose arpeggios, at first dreamy then tempestuous, perfectly convey the spirit of hope and struggle.

The *commons* is an omnibus term carrying a lot of freight and covering a lot of territory. The commons refers both to an idea and to a practice. As a general idea the commons means equality of economic conditions. As a particular practice the commons refers to forms of both collective labor and communal distribution. The term suggests alternatives to patriarchy, to private property, to capitalism, and to competition. Elinor Ostrom, Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Naomi Klein, Silvia Federici, Silke Helfrich, Leigh Brownhill, Rebecca Solnit, Vandana Shiva, and J. M. Neeson are noted scholars who have written about the commons.⁶ Not that the subject has been ignored by men. Gustavo Esteva, George Caffentzis, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, David Graeber, Lewis Hyde, David Bollier, Raj Patel, Herbert Reid, Betsy Taylor, Michael Watts, Iain Boal, Janferie Stone, and

6. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*; Bollier, Helfrich, and Heinrich Böll Foundation, *Wealth of the Commons*; Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, *Subsistence Perspective*; Brownhill, *Land, Food, Freedom*; Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*; Federici, "Feminism"; Solnit, *Paradise Built in Hell*; Klein, "Reclaiming the Commons"; Shiva, *Violence*; Neeson, *Commoners*.

Massimo De Angelis have contributed to the planetary discussion.⁷ Historically, the commons has been friendlier to women (and children) than the factory, mine, or plantation. This book is about the commons, whose meanings gradually emerge through the history recounted here. The following summaries can help that understanding. The three parts of this book are divided into ten sections.

1. Love is the beginning of the commons and the reason this Anglo-Irish renegade died for “the human race,” in the words Ned and Kate composed together and Ned delivered on 21 February 1803 as he stood on the gallows. “The Quest” for the grave of Catherine Despard and the quest for the commons are joined. One chapter introduces an unknown but extraordinary African American woman and the part that Irish revolutionaries played in protecting her after her husband was executed as a traitor to the English crown. This is a story both of a couple and of the commons. Doubtless eros was part of their love—Ned and Kate had a son—and so was philia, or that egalitarian love of comrades and friends. The love of the commons was akin to that love the Greeks called agape, the creative and redemptive love of justice, with its sacred connotations. Silvia Federici has expressed agape this way: “No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life, our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed if ‘commoning’ has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject.”⁸ The human race as understood by Ned and Kate was a collective subject. They were not in it for riches or fame but for freedom and equality. The commons was both a goal and a means to attain them. Henry Mayhew, the Victorian investigator of the urban proletariat and Karl Marx’s contemporary, described two means of equalizing wealth, communism and agapism.⁹ Were we not to neglect the commons and their enclosures we might find that it—the commons—is the bridge linking romanticism and radicalism, philia with agape. That is the project of this book, that is, to walk that bridge, hand in hand with Ned and Kate. “The Quest for the Commons” places the notion of the commons within a specific location—Ireland—and a specific time in Irish history, by referring to Robert

7. Esteva and Prakash, *Grassroots Post-Modernism*; Patel, *Value*; Hyde, *Common as Air*; Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*; Graeber, *Debt*; Reid and Taylor, *Recovering the Commons*; Bollier, *Silent Theft*; Boal, Stone, and Winslow, *West of Eden*; De Angelis, *Omnia Sunt Communia*; Caffentzis, “On the Scottish Origin.”

8. Federici, *Re-enchanting the Commons*.

9. Mayhew, *London Life*, 2:256.

Emmet's revolt of 1803 and the Gothic and Romantic treatments of the commons.

2. Two obstacles troubled our quest. The gallows was one, killing and thus silencing those who knew, and the underground was the other, where those who knew covered their tracks. *Thanatocracy* means government by death. Three chapters explore state hangings. The first ("Despard at the Gallows") was on 21 February 1803, when Colonel Edward Marcus Despard with six others were executed as traitors in London.

The Despard story is told often in the empirical mode of a whodunit, or, rather, a did he or didn't he? After he with forty others were apprehended at the Oakley Arms in November 1802, he was found guilty of treason for conspiring to destroy the king; subvert the constitution; and seize the tower, the bank, and the palace. The capitalist class distills financial, economic, military, political, and cultural power in centralized establishments of the state, which in Despard's day included the Crown, the armory, the mint, and the church. These became the targets of the conspiracy bearing his name. Several skilled historians have dealt with the conspiracy (E. P. Thompson, David Worrall, Ann Hone, Malcolm Chase, Iain McCalman, Marianne Elliott, Roger Wells) and two biographers (Clifford Conner and Mike Jay) have put him in Irish and Atlantic settings.¹⁰ My approach replaces the question of whodunit with why bother, which is answered by shifting perspectives on the commons, from the local, to the national, to the imperial, to the terraqueous, to the transatlantic, to the red round globe.

Ned's "last dying words" ("Despard at the Gallows") express Ned and Kate's vision of the commons. "Gibbets of Civilization" shows how the development of gallows humor began to undermine the repressive effects of hanging. It takes significant examples from the major components of the proletariat, namely, servants, artisans, slaves, and sailors. These can become political divisions within the working class. "Apples from the Green Tree of Liberty" ends with the "last words" of other Irish revolutionaries who were martyred during the Rebellion of 1798. Their words evince both colonial liberation and the commons. Irish freedom fighters transformed the gallows from a stage of terror to a platform of resistance.

3. The first of two chapters in "The Underground" concerns the geological strata lying beneath the ground ("The Anthropocene and the Stages of

10. Thompson, *Making*; Worrall, *Radical Culture*; McCalman, *Radical Underworld*; Elliott, "Despard Conspiracy Reconsidered"; Hone, *For the Cause*; Chase, "People's Farm"; Conner, *Colonel Despard*; Jay, *Unfortunate Colonel Despard*; Wells, *Wretched Faces*.

History”). The human race was changing, and so was planet Earth. Enclosure, slavery, steam power, and coal, the latter with unintended chthonic consequences, were upon us. The International Commission on Stratigraphy of the International Union of Geological Sciences has taken the term *Anthropocene* under consideration to designate a new epoch said to have commenced at this time with its “human perturbations of the earth system.”¹¹

Rather than being associated with the dire connotations of the Anthropocene, the epoch has traditionally been connected to the progressive connotations of the Industrial Revolution. Its factory-housed, steam-powered machinery together formed an automatic system that inverted the relation between human labor and tools, removing intelligence, depriving interest, forbidding play, and consuming the life and body parts of humans. A flaw in some current thinking jumps from our era of Internet commoning to the agricultural commons of medieval Europe, omitting the period when “mechanization took command,”¹² when the archipelago of prisons began to over- spread the world, and when the death ships (Middle Passage) and the death camps (plantations) became the engines of accumulation. This oversight prevents analysis of the struggle between those who lost commons and the landlords, bankers, and industrialists, who were responsible for the “human perturbations of the earth system” and who turned the world upside down by inverting the lithosphere and the stratosphere.

The historian describing the origins of capitalism looks skeptically at the aura of inevitability that accompanied it, because in their victory parade history’s rulers not only trampled on the losers, as Walter Benjamin pointed out, but claimed that there was no alternative. History became a machine with laws, determinations, and inevitabilities called “improvement,” “development,” or “progress.” Ned and Kate provide an antidote to such determinism. Ned and Kate were revolutionaries, a man and a woman consciously working with others to change the course of history to obtain specific goals.

“E. P. Thompson and the Irish Commons” is about the necessity of clandestine organizing when the repressive apparatus of the ruling class pushes the opposition into exile, silence, or cunning. Taking their cue from *Hamlet*, historians from Hegel to Marx have likened this underground to the mole. Others link the underground to hell, “the belly of the beast.” The commons persisted underground. On the one hand, its radicalism, from the cognate

11. Zalasiewica et al., “Response to Austin,” e21–22.

12. Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command*.

roots, developed a vast mycelium. The geological, political, and mythic meanings, on the other hand, are applied to a false philosophy of history and to a startling omission in historiography. Coincidences abound at the time of Despard's arrest in November 1802—scientific socialism (Engels), the theory of the earth (Hutton), coal as industrial energy, and finally the Anthropocene itself. One of the themes of this story is the “underground,” so to think of mountains beneath the sea is no more weird than finding evidence of the sea among the mountains, as the fossil hunters of the epoch so often did.

4. The five chapters in “Ireland” find meanings of the commons through biographical facts in the life and family of Edward Marcus Despard.

The “commons,” expresses first, that which the working class lost when subsistence resources were taken away, and second, “the commons” expresses idealized visions of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*. As a term, *commons* is indispensable despite its complex associations with Romanticism and communism. We can think of the commons as negation, that is, as the opposite of privatization, conquest, commodification, and individualism. This, however, is to put the cart before the horse. If the commons is too general a category because it is susceptible to idealizing misuse, the remedy is not to discard it but rather to begin the analysis by means of historical induction. When Tacitus, the Roman historian of the first century, described it among the Germanic tribes, it became a linguistic and economic puzzle to generations upon generations of scholars of the commons.

We're inclined to put the commons in the Middle Ages, as a habit of mind or a habit of being—even a longing for habitus or home—that originates in the stages theory of history known as stadialism. For modern history, the antagonistic dynamic between the state and the commons began in the sixteenth century. In its Renaissance origins, the state was against the commons. On the eve of Henry VIII's 1536 dissolution of the monasteries, the single largest state land grab in British history, Thomas Elyot, Henry VIII's advisor, wrote the *Book Named the Governor* (1531). Elyot begins by distinguishing *res publica* from *res communis*, defining the latter as “every thing should be to all men in common.” He asserts it was advocated by the plebeians, and was without order, estate, or hierarchy. This distinction between the public, or the realm of the state, and the commons, or the realm of the common people, became the essence of statecraft.

The planetary conception of the commons refers to the idealized one developed in Christianity, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism. The radical Digger of the English Revolution Gerrard Winstanley, for instance, said that

the earth is a common treasury for all, while Jean Jacques Rousseau, the Swiss philosophe, took the commons as his starting point in the story of man.¹³ The Romantic poets expanded the notion in the 1790s, helped by Thomas Spence, the humble, tireless advocate of the agrarian commons.

Despard was a minor part of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, that is, the ruling class of Protestant, English-language speakers, in contrast to the Catholic, Irish-language-speaking peasantry (“Habendum” and “Hotchpot”). His ancestors came to Ireland at the time of Queen Elizabeth, when one of its conquerors—John Harington (1560–1612)—quipped, “Treason doth never prosper. What’s the reason? Why if it prosper, none dare call it treason,” indirectly linking colonial liberation to revolutionary change in the metropolis. Irish storytelling remained unenclosed; it retained and expressed miraculous relations (“That’s True Anyhow”). Ned himself prospered more by talent than property and was able to escape the Irish Whiteboy agrarian war against enclosures by a commission in the British army, which led to his assignment in the Caribbean (“A Boy amid the Whiteboys”).

5. In the five chapters making up “America,” Kate and the meaning of “love” in a slave society are introduced (“America! Utopia! Equality! Crap.”). As the Irishman Lawrence Sterne wrote to the African Ignatio Sancho, “’tis no uncommon thing, my good Sancho, for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, & then endeavor to make ’em so.” The relationship of male master to female slave was vile and violent. Two political meanings of *America* are described: one led to the creation of the United States, which was deliberately and consciously opposed to the commons, while the other exalted the commons. “Cooperation and Survival in Jamaica” relates how Despard’s career as an artillery officer took him to successes in Jamaica after Tacky’s slave revolt (1760). The chapter on “Nicaragua and the Miskito Commons” describes the disastrous military expedition of 1780, the results of which almost saved Despard’s neck twenty-three years later. He befriended, among others, the Miskito Indians, and that friendship formed part of his policy, described in “Honduras and the Mayan Commons.” He bucked imperial policy and rejected white racial supremacy. His sympathetic understanding of indigenous practices strengthened his commitment to the commons, causing the colonial planters to have him removed.

Three kinds of commons have emerged from this quest—subsistence, ideal, and American. The subsistence commons embraces mutuality, or

13. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*.

working together. You *practice* the commons, you *common*: “So much of the land was in some way shared.”¹⁴ Enclosure is a dis-commoning. Of course there are ecologies—woodland, highland, wetland, and sea—other than the arable field, with its grasses of wheat (bread) and barley (beer). In these ecologies, foraging prevailed over millennia, providing the basis of that “barbarian” commons described by James C. Scott.¹⁵ Still the classical commons has classical roots in the *ager publicus* that Spartacus fought for. What was called “The Agrarian Law” of equal land distribution was advocated by the Gracchi brothers, Tiberius and Gaius.

Common right is a power of direct, mutual appropriation, in contrast to the exclusivity of private property that goes one way—from “ours” to “mine.” It bypasses the commodity form and commodity exchange by meeting human needs directly, usually in the form of housework or domestic subsistence, as is the case with wood for cooking fuel or pasturage for cow’s milk. The commons as a social relationship is related to the commons as a natural resource, but they are not the same. The two meanings of the *commons* were suggested in Dr. Johnson’s *Dictionary* (1755): 1) “one of the common people; a man [*sic!*] of low rank; of mean condition,” and 2) “an open ground equally used by many persons.”¹⁶

The second type is the ideal commons. “The Whole Business of Man is the Arts & All Things in Common,” wrote William Blake, etching in copper. The early Christians were enjoined to have “all things common” (Acts 2:44, 4:32). From “the Golden Age” of Greek and Roman antiquity to the medieval “Land of Cockaigne” (where there are no lice, flies, or fleas, and monks actually fly), you read about the ideal commons, or you might dream it. These ideas were not restricted to the commons of property; they described general conditions of mutuality and happiness for all. It is also important to see that these states of perfection arose in historical conditions that were more or less understood but that nevertheless happened in *this* world and not in the hereafter. These are stirring notions, able to excite the idealism of young and old. Ever since the rainbow sign of the Peasant’s Revolt of 1525 called for all things in common, *omnia sunt communia* has been the program of those opposing state-backed privatization.

14. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right*, 3.

15. Scott, *Against the Grain*.

16. *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1755).

The third type of commons is observed (not dreamt), and it applies to the whole society (not dropouts). I call it the American commons because of a powerful and dangerous ambivalence at its heart: it is neither wholly real nor wholly imaginary. Like “America,” it was a European name whose referent was to the indigenous people in contrast to European settlers. Europeans mixed travelers’ observations with projected fantasies, hopes and fears of their own. The commons became literally utopian, a neologism derived from two Greek words meaning good place or no place and the title of the 1516 book by Thomas More.¹⁷ In *Utopia*, an island commonwealth off the coast of South America, “all things being there common, every man hath abundance of everything.” This commons could be an aspect of the early days of the settler colony with its theft of indigenous common land.

“In the beginning all the world was America,” wrote John Locke, “and more so than is now; for no such thing as money was any where known.”¹⁸ The ambivalence of the American commons is found in the influential anthropological theory of “primitive communism” developed by Lewis Henry Morgan, whose studies of the Iroquois peoples (and advocacy of their lands) directly influenced Marx and Engels, as well as in the anthropological notion of “primitive communism”—a condition of mutual aid, simplicity of tools, and group ownership of resources.

Ned and Kate experienced all three kinds of commons—the subsistence, the ideal, and the American. They were not alone. People with experience in all three began to encounter one another during the 1790s. Because of the revolutionary promise of such encounters, the rulers attempted to obliterate and erase the commons with the enclosures of prison, land, factory, and plantation: Blake’s abyss—the “red round globe hot burning.” The red round globe hot burning might refer either to what we would call the Anthropocene, with its planetary warming, or to the revolutionary struggles of the era and the fires on the slave plantations.

6. “Haiti” shows that there is no understanding either modern Europe or America unless the Haitian Revolution is placed squarely in the middle.¹⁹ It commenced on a commons, the Bois des Caïmen, in August 1791, and lasted until independence was won more than a decade later, at the time of Despard’s

17. *Utopia*, 43–44.

18. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 145.

19. Scott, *Common Wind*.

plot and execution in 1803. Susan Buck-Morss says of 1802 and Hegel's simultaneous engagement with Adam Smith and the Haitian revolt that "theory and reality converged at this historical moment."²⁰ None personified that convergence as fully as the couple Edward and Catherine Despard.

"Thelwall and Haiti" introduces a leading reformer in England who opposed enclosure. The government mobbed John Thelwall when he was speaking and locked him up in prison. His reactions to the Haitian revolt reveal the historic separation between the practical revolutionary and the poetic idealist. Constance Volney, an aristocratic philosophe and revolutionary, is described in "Volney in Ireland." His work, translated into English by Jefferson, influenced both Haitian and Irish militants by its secular critique of religion and class analysis of political power. The thinking of the ruling class asserted that the "splits" between man and woman, patrician and plebeian, black people and white, and poor folk and rich were "natural" and "eternal." By bringing temporal exactitude to the political origins of these divisions, the chapter "A Spot in Time" shows them to be otherwise. What did *race* mean and how were its meanings changing with the expansion of racial slavery? Ned and Kate had a child, a mixed-race boy named John Edward, who rebuts one of those splits.

7. "England" follows Ireland, America, and Haiti as the fourth peak among the Atlantic mountains. Ned and Kate embarked on their revolutionary project with its woeful termination. England was ruled by landlords, of both an aristocratic militarist kind and a bourgeois kind intent on high rents. To advance their causes of conquest and profit, the enclosure of land and the abolition of commons at home became part and parcel with war on colonial subjects and their commons. "The System of Man Eaters" describes the systematic worldwide violence led by the prime minister William Pitt and the opposition in England that included direct action by Despard against that system. "Goose and Commons" takes its inspiration from the folkloric by approaching the commons from the standpoint of a little poetic koan about a goose. A "Den of Thieves" examines a single act of enclosure in Enfield that transpired at the time of Despard's plot. With "Commons or True Commons," the section on England concludes by directly exploring what the commons meant during the 1790s, when actual commons were destroyed by landlords' law, but virtual commons were elevated as revolutionary ideals.

20. Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti*, 60.

8. “The Business” is a euphemism that Despard and his coconspirators used to refer to their insurrectionary conspiracy and revolutionary intentions. Their “business” was necessarily clandestine, and the popular forces to which it appealed were necessarily underground. The euphemism covers an indeterminate group of forces, some of which are described in part two (“Atlantic Mountains”), where the struggles for the commons in Ireland, in the Caribbean, in central America, and in England are taken up. In London Despard and his coconspirators met a proletariat of exiled Irish revolutionaries—veterans of war, sailors, servants, and craftsmen facing machine degradation—influenced by ideas of the London democrats. In parallel to the enclosure of land, they found their labor in handicraft and manufactures either enclosed in the factory or criminalized by the police authorities, as described in “Criminalization and the Labor Process.” Artisan, servant, and laborer were alienated from the means and materials of production, as well as from its products. As products became commodities, custom became crime. Ned and Kate may be understood as colonial personifications of volcanic energies—“hot burning” from below. The “business” of the day was the commons, understood as both a *description* of healthy subsistence practices and as a revolutionary *aspiration* of human freedom. Thermodynamic forces became essential to the struggle as shown in “Irish Labor, England Coal.” The cough became a sign of the times.

9. The section called “Prison” consists of four chapters, each touching on Despard’s incarceration and the closing of the commons in England. Prison “reform” at the end of the eighteenth century sought 1) to protect private property and 2) to establish social discipline and a compliant subject to the economic, social, and racial hierarchies. “In Debt in Prison” began to replace the gallows, reaching a culmination in the panopticon named and elaborated by Jeremy Bentham, a utopian architect of enclosure in its broad sense. Arthur Young, the agronomist, meanwhile, was its practical advocate in the narrow sense. Young concentrated on the agrarian field as Bentham focused on manufacturers in his advocacy of social enclosure. Despard was imprisoned in King’s Bench Prison for debt. In Cold Bath Fields Prison, he suffered extreme deprivation and was quite literally “In Prison without a Spoon.” Also in King’s Bench he dwelt in a porous environment where sport (“Rackets in Prison”) was practiced in a common space. The last chapter, “Kate Confronts the Penitentiary,” brings *Red Round Globe Hot Burning* to its climax. The prison was a crossroads among countries and among ideas. Neither gallows, fences, high walls, war, nor exile could obliterate or erase the

commons. Kate, the fearless abolitionist, the tireless prison reformer, the United Irish woman, is the hero of this story.

10. “Two Stories” has four chapters. “The Whole Business of Man” concerns Blake and Despard—neighbors and contemporaries of each other. They summarized this epoch in the history of mankind, the former with the poetry of prophecy and the other by prophetic deeds. In so doing, they pointed to roads not taken. The following two chapters tell actual stories. The first (“The Red Cap of Liberty”) is a ghost story from famine times that recollects the revolutionary times of Despard’s era of the ’98. It is a tale in which hopefulness is firmly footed in county Laois, Ned’s Irish birthplace. The second is an animal story (“Red Crested Bird and Black Duck”) that arose in the Great Lakes of North America and was retold in 1802 among Dublin’s antiquaries, who compared it to Homer. These stories, from nations of storytellers, make sense of historical defeats. *Red Round Globe Hot Burning* concludes with a question. “What Is the Human Race?” starts with Ned and Kate’s gallows speech. To ask the question reasserts the power of human agency, of freedom.

Contemporary forms of commoning (Zapatistas, Occupy, Standing Rock, and their like) inspired the renewed discourse of the commons, and they also inspired me to investigate its history and to discover that the ideas were not pie in the sky, though of course the ruling class and its chroniclers will say otherwise. If knowledge of the commons when it was actually produced was suppressed, this suppression was related, I thought, to the suppression of women’s history in social reproduction. Professor Neeson taught us in the 1990s that commons regimes were friendlier to women than the economic and social regimes based on private property.

Ned and Kate were colonial subjects who lost their bid to put humankind on a different path, a road not taken. Their love for each other was part of their love of the commons. Eros, philia, and agape met their downfall in the Malthusian love of calculated breeding, or *ektrophe*, which serves the state and capital. If to remember Ned and Kate is to say that the Blakean equation, Enclosure = Death, need not rule and if their memory helps us affirm the association between our love of one another and the project of commoning, then surely, I thought, my investigation should begin with Kate’s remains.