

September 2025

Newsletter n°24



Dear friends,

We hope this finds you well. September is always an exciting month for us, not only because it marks the beginning of a new academic term, but because Carantes was founded in September! Our very first meeting, in fact, took place on September 16th 2022. We did not immediately begin posting newsletters, as we initially had only a very vague sense that something needed to be done, and no real idea how to do it. In the time since that first meeting, the possibilities have grown before us, almost exponentially from the moment that [we decided to go public](#). There is now a reading group open to all, there was a great Carantes pannel recently at the Gorwelion conference in Aberystwyth (though our apologies for technical difficulties on the stream - and we're working on the possibility of distributing the recording pending permission and translation), and in the past year there has been a deescalation training, a craft night and many good conversations on the discord server. Overall, we are delighted that our vision for a truly democratic network of antifascists has

expanded in such excellent ways. Thanks to you all for your part in this fight, which has only gotten more pressing as the years have passed.

This last week, we have witnessed the USA fall to a staggering increase in violent rhetoric, and outright violence too. Categorizing trans people as a "["nihilistic violent extremist group"](#)", designating [Antifa as a terrorist organization](#), these are choices made to criminalize political opposition that will certainly result in violent acts against fragile minority groups. We condemn them in the strongest possible terms, as the actions of a fascist group intent upon seizing power for their own profit and the destruction of an already unstable democratic society. In these dire times, we encourage you to seek out and build community. We will continue to provide this space for that purpose.

## Upcoming!

There is going to be a **public talk** for our Samhain meeting in **November**. Stay tuned, **details forthcoming!**

We have also included a **call for papers for a conference examining insular marginalities in the Middle Ages** at the University of Caen, in France, in June 2026. You'll find it attached to the email in which you got this newsletter.

## Readings!

We thought it would be a good idea at this time of our anniversary to go back to basics with today's reading recommendation. Members have joined the mailing list and the discord at different times, and some might have missed important discussions or concepts. The essay we invite you to read here is one that is **both foundational and accessible** to anyone wanting to understand fascism better, or if you need a handy resource to circulate to someone who could benefit from this knowledge.

['Ur-Fascism'](#) is an essay written in 1995 by Umberto Eco, an Italian philosopher, semiotician, and medievalist. Born in 1932 in Alessandria, Eco grew up under Italian fascism and the authoritarian leadership of Mussolini. This first-hand experience, along with subsequent studies and reflections on the subject, led to the writing of this essay and the definition of fascism that it contains.

We are often faced with the tricky issue of defining fascism and its different components. In the past, we had often used 'vibes' to talk about it, a term which had to itself be explained in turn (see our [October 2023 newsletter](#)). Eco is incredibly useful in this sense, as he explains the concept of family resemblance to talk about different types of fascisms. Even if they appear far removed, the various kinds of fascist regimes that one might encounter may very well be connected through this principle of family resemblance.

Keeping that in mind, Eco, while acknowledging that there isn't a single, definitive, sure-fire way to describe fascism, identifies **fourteen elements that provide easily spotted red flags**. Much like for a disease, a group or ideology does not have to display all of these elements, or symptoms, in order to reach a diagnosis. Even a few of these elements combined are enough to raise alarm. To cite Eco himself: 'it is enough that one of them be present to allow fascism to coagulate around it'.

We will not summarise the fourteen points here, as Eco's writing is already concise, but we invite you to go through them yourself. In quite a striking manner, Eco identifies upcoming issues, or new manifestations of some of the problems he lists which we have unfortunately already come to witness, such as the role the internet plays in shaping up what is perceived as the voice of the people. RIP Eco, you would have loved (and hated) tiktok.

Eco also highlights how some of these points are contradictory, which is in itself a staple of fascism. He explains how, in its rejection of the Enlightenment, **fascism is by default at odds with reason**, and can even be described as irrationalism. This is a fact that we must always come back to in our study of and fight against fascism. Logic, reason, and research are not a part of its formation or its inner workings. It is often made of **empty rhetoric and a whole bunch of feelings**. Knowing what we are fighting against, being able to point it out and call it by its real name, fascism, those are the first essential steps in this battle. 'Our duty is to uncover it and to point our finger at any of its new instances - every day, in every part of the world. [...] Freedom and liberation are an unending task'.

And so it is, in these difficult times. Many of us live in places where liberties are eroding before our eyes, in scary and precipitous ways. In my home town in Brittany, this weekend, a [group of about twenty local fascists raided a bar with baseball bats](#) and managed to hurt three people before getting chased off. As we attended a march, heartsick at the thought of such things happening, my partner expressed frustration that we have been marching against them for so many years, with no end in sight. I think this fatigue is shared by many. But freedom and liberation truly are an unending task, one we take on together in the knowledge that **the fight is never over**, and that **it is just as much about sustaining each other in solidarity and empathy**, as it is **striving to extinguish hate wherever we find it**.

Thank you for doing this work with us. Keep well, keep safe, keep in touch!

Your friends at



Logo by [ForFedA](#).

Image credit: Umberto Eco in Milan, 2011. Oliver Mark, [CC BY-SA 4](#).