

Before plastic fangs and fake blood, October 31st was a day of rebellion; the history of Halloween spans five hundred years and two continents, featuring pagan rebels in the Medieval British Isles, the European witch hunts, Irish migration to the States, and even widespread arsons in Detroit in the 1980s.

the devil's night

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OCTOBER 31, ALL YEAR ROUND.

ORIGINS OF THE HALLOWEEN SPIRIT

Though widely recognized across North America, the origins of Halloween are poorly understood by many of its celebrants, likely due to their dark, unsavory, and disorderly nature. Its calendar date and etymology are undeniably Christian (from “All Hallows’ Evening,” the night before All Saints Day on November 1st), but the *spirit* that animates this “Halloween machine” is widely thought to originate from the pagan New Year celebrations of the *Keltoi* people (or Celts) of Ireland.

The Keltoi, whose name is likely derived from *kel-*, the Indo-European prefix for the “hidden,” were a diverse constellation of Celtic-speaking tribes that spread across much of Europe and the British Isles between the Iron Age and Early Middle Ages, even occupying Rome for a period of time around 400 BCE. Because of these *hidden people’s* refusal to commit their oral history and scholarship to written records, much of the most spectacular accounts of these “primitive” pagans and their “bloodthirsty” human sacrifice have been written by their imperial enemies like Julius Caesar and thus should be considered suspect at best.

What is known almost for certain, however, is that many Keltoi of the British Isles believed in an afterlife called *Tír na tSamhraidh*, or the “Land of Summer.” The doors to this Other world were only opened once a year on *Samhain* (pronounced *SOW-in*), the period between the two nights of October 31 and November 1. According to Nicholas Rogers, the author of *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night*,

Samhain beckoned to winter and the dark nights ahead. It was quint-essentially ‘an old pastoral and agricultural festival [...] It was also a period of supernatural intensity, when the forces of darkness and decay were said to be abroad, spilling out from the sidh, the ancient mounds or barrows of the countryside. To ward off these spirits, the Irish built huge, symbolically regenerative bonfires and invoked the help of the gods through animal and perhaps even human sacrifice. [...] In Celtic lore, it marked the boundary between summer and winter, light and darkness. [...] It represented a time out of time, a brief interval ‘when the normal order of the universe in suspended’ and ‘charged with a peculiar preternatural energy.’

These *liminal interludes*, as Barry Cunliffe calls them in *The Celts*, were particularly dangerous because “they were times when anything could happen and it was only by careful adherence to ritual and propitiation that

a precarious order could be maintained.” Lisa Morton, another Halloween scholar and the author of *Trick or Treat: A History of Halloween*, crucially adds that this was the only time of the year with a relative abundance of food and alcohol which contributed to Samhain’s festive and mischievous atmosphere. She also adds that, in addition to Beltane on May 1st, it was one of the two most important days in the Keltoi’s often frightening heroic folk tales, like that of,

the Formorians, a race of demonic giants who have conquered Ireland after a great battle, demand a yearly tax of two-thirds of the subdued survivors’ corn, milk, and children, to be paid each year on Samhain. The Tuatha de Danann, a race of godlike, benevolent ancestors chronicled in Celtic mythology, battle against the Fomorians for years, but it takes the Morrigan, a mother god, and the hero Angus Og to finally drive the monsters from Ireland – on Samhain, of course.

In these multiple accounts of Samhain, we can find themes that will come to define Halloween and follow it through its long history – particularly those of liminality, excess, celebration, mischief, darkness, fire, demons, and, perhaps most important to this essay, rebellion. When I obsessively began researching Detroit’s Devil’s Night a month ago, it was not immediately clear what its connection with this larger tradition would be, but as I began to work backward I began to uncover a genealogy that I couldn’t ignore. From the anti-Christian heresy of the medieval British Isles to the widespread arson of 1980s Detroit, we will see as this spirit of Halloween will continue to intersect with several notable subversive moments throughout its long life, constantly re-inventing itself to evade the forces of law and order.

THE WITCH HAMMER, c. 700-1590 CE

Though Samhain provided Halloween with these raw, disorderly materials, it actually gave the holiday very little in terms of concrete practices or symbolism, excepting bonfires. These traditions, including the name of *Halloween*, came later in the Medieval period with the violent imposition of Christianity and its holy days, All Souls’ and All Saints’ Day. Originally celebrated on May 13 as a remembrance of Christian martyrs who had died at the hands of pagans, *Lemuria* (as it was previously known) was moved to November 1st by the Pope and rebranded as a more palatable, positive cel-

Camden and Ferguson's into Baltimore, it's possible to conceive of the spirit of Halloween returning not as a discrete moment in October, but, in the words of one old revolutionary, "a holiday without beginning or end."

October 31, all year round.

celebration of "all the saints." Later, the early Church added All Souls' Day on November 2, conveniently bookending the celebration with an opportunity to pray for the souls of the deceased that were trapped in Purgatory. According to Morton, however, "it seems more likely that the gloomy, ghostly new celebration was added to cement the transformation of Samhain from pagan to Christian holiday."

Three centuries later, this gloomy and ghostly nature of All Souls' Day transformed from an exceptional, temporary celebration to the daily reality of most Europeans as the Black Death began to spread throughout the western hemisphere. Beginning in 1346 and peaking around 1350, the plague killed as much as 60 percent of Europe's population and left the surviving population with an unavoidable preoccupation with death. This, coupled with the simultaneous spread of the printing press, led to the mass circulation of Danse Macabre imagery and a generalized perception of Death as a personified subject, which one can still see in modern celebrations of Halloween. Though the figure of Death was originally portrayed as an animated skeleton, the opportunity was quickly seized by the Church and early capitalists to re-purpose this body of enmity in order to target a rebellious subject whom they had both long considered a threat but were now finally strong enough to destroy: the witch.

According to Arthur Evans' recently republished 1978 book, *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*,

Despite its contempt for magic, the early church did not organize a full-scale attack against magicians and witches because it was not yet strong enough. The Christianity of the early middle ages was largely an affair of the King and the upper class of warlords. The rest of society remained pagan. In addition, early medieval Christians were hampered by a general breakdown of centralized authority in both church and state. Anarchy favored paganism.

However, as Evans continues,

By the early thirteenth century, [...] the church was much better organized and ready to act. Its immediate target was heresy: the numerous and widespread attempts to combine traditional Christianity with elements of the old religion. To deal with this, the church launched crusades and started the Holy Inquisition. [...] Now it began to look at the historical sources of heresy – the surviving old religion that modern historians view as 'folklore,' 'peasant fantasy,' and 'strange fertility rites.' Feeling its privilege, power, and world view

threatened by these sources, the fifteenth-century ruling class fantasized that Satan was conspiring to overthrow the power of Christ's church on earth.

With this consolidation of sovereign power and the figurative marriage of Satan and witches began what came to be known as *The Great Witch-Hunt*. In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici traces the lineage of this mass genocide beyond just the Christian elite's fear of paganism but to a whole world of generalized peasant revolts and the powerful, undomesticated women who likely organized them. Though this population was likely quite heterogeneous and their activities today may be likened to those of midwives, abortionists, sex workers, and popular healers among others, their enemies were able to collapse their commonalities into the identity of *the witch*, which could then be surgically targeted for removal.

According to Evans, the early Church "turned homosexuality into heresy" and began to collapse the two identities so that to call someone a heretic was to call them a homosexual, and vice versa. And "because of the methods of the Inquisition, [...] great numbers of Lesbians and Gay men must have lost their lives." We can also assume that the many individuals who today might have self-identified as transgender were likely also targeted for extermination. Besides the story of *Joan of Arc: Transvestite and Heretic*, there is unfortunately very little other research into this history and, therefore, my only reference point for this period will be Federici's figure of the witch-as-woman.

The authorities obsessed over that these *witches* largely lived alone, relied on public assistance, were sexually "promiscuous," and encouraged non-procreative sex (by means of contraception and abortions). Because these activities interfered with male supremacy, heteronormativity, population growth, compulsory labor, domestication, and order - in a word, *civilization* - the witch started being painted as a threat to *life itself*. According to Federici, "Witches were accused of conspiring to destroy the generative power of humans and animals, of procuring abortions, and of belonging to an infanticidal sect devoted to killing children and offering them to the devil."

But, according to Federici, these accusations did not spontaneously generate from the witches' own neighbors overnight. Instead, a highly-organized campaign of indoctrination was introduced from above and spread from village to village traveling public officials. All this was only possible

lators would face expedited processing at temporary nighttime courtrooms; and *Prohibition on the Sale of Fuel by means of criminalizing the sale of dispensing of gasoline into portable containers*.

In each of these eight headlines, we can find almost perfectly mirrored strategies depicted in Kristian Williams' essay *The Other Side of COIN*, many of which he directly cited from *U.S. Army Field Manual on Counterinsurgency* and British brigadier Frank Kitson's strategies against anti-colonial movements in Kenya, Cypress, and Northern Ireland. Of particular significance to many of these strategies is the goal of "monopolizing the use of force" and establish legitimacy in doing so, which the Army field manual asserts as "*the main objective*." One can particularly see this in the conflicting strategy of guarding *and* demolishing abandoned homes, a clearly desperately attempt to re-establish control over a territory that had subverted its monopoly on destruction by self-immolating. As part of maintaining its fragile legitimacy, however, the city couldn't simply call in the National Guard again; instead it had to source its army from the remaining loyal segments of the city's population to do its bidding. This "Halloween anti-arson intervention," when viewed through Williams' simple equation reveals its obvious and undeniable nature: *Community Policing + Militarization = Counterinsurgency*.

Between 1985-1996, largely by means of these counterinsurgency strategies and anti-gang initiatives, the city of Detroit was able to considerably reduce Halloween-time arson within the city. Though it is tempting to conclude that this may have been the moment when the rebellious spirit of Halloween was finally killed, to do so would deny the almost constant low-intensity insurgency that remained and would later spread to other cities like Camden and Cincinnati. In 1994, after the new mayor of Detroit publicly declared the death of Devil's Night and mobilized a significantly smaller number of citizen patrols, the numbers of arsons dramatically rose, forcing him to mobilize an army of 30,000 "Angel's Night" volunteers the following October. Given this constant obligation to douse its flames, perhaps we should not speak of the death of Halloween, but instead, its temporary imprisonment.

But if the history presented here is any indication, moments of disorder are not only unpredictable but evasive by their very nature of disrupting of linear time and ordered space. As the rare moments of social peace between upheavals become ever shorter and the fires of Detroit blends into

ral tropes to target an opaque and population that had long been mystified the white population. Much in the same way that the *witch* was manufactured to target a heterogeneous population with the figure of a supernatural, life-stealing Other, the figure of the *Devil* had also been revived to literally *demonize* the insurgent black youth of Detroit. According to Carole Nagengast's *Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State*, "the goal of state violence is not to inflict pain; it is the social project of creating punishable categories of people."

Though many residents and politicians speculated about the circumstances that produced the widespread arson of 1984, David Skal notes that the influential *Detroit Free Press* newspaper noticeably avoided any sociological analysis in the months after, instead favoring a "law-and-order approach to Halloween Eve arson and crime, including gun control, aggressive prosecution, and more jail cells." According to the authors of an enlightening research paper entitled *Preventing Halloween Arson in an Urban Setting*, it was the following that Mayor Coleman Young then created a "Devil's Night Task Force," tasked with goals of "reduced arson, raised community awareness, and increased involvement in the fight against arson" over the next decade. Each spring, appointees from the mayor's office, Detroit Neighborhood City Halls, city departments (including public health, fire, police, youth, public lighting, law, recreation, information technology, planning, among others), community organizations, churches, public schools, and the private sector would convene to begin creating strategies based on insights gleaned from previous years.

With these in hand, fire and police officials from each neighborhood would collaborate with neighborhood snitches and influential clergy to create "decentralized action plans" to enact a larger eight point, city-wide strategy: *Deployment of Public Safety Personnel*, by means of mobilizing all available police, firefighters, and helicopters; *The Elimination of Arson Targets* by means of towing abandoned cars, removing tires from dumping sites, and demolishing thousands of vacant homes and buildings; *Volunteer Training* by means of offered orientations to Adopt-A-House volunteers who wanted to guard abandoned buildings or Neighborhood Patrols who wanted to seek out arsonists on foot; *Media and Communications* by means of an aggressive PR campaign to convey "the dangers of arson"; *Activities for Children and Teenagers* by means of church and city-sponsored movie marathons, dances, carnivals, etc.; *Youth Curfew* in the form of a 6pm curfew for those under 18, whose vio-

with the mass generation of propaganda using the most advanced technology of the day - the printing press. Of particular importance to re-imagining these rebellious women as demon-worshipping baby killers were the widely circulated copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the evocative images created from the engravings of Hans Baldung Grien. In his most famous work, *Witches' Sabbath*, one can see precursors to images of witches we still can find on Hallmark cards today - deformed bodies gathering around a bubbling caldron with their animal familiars (later portrayed as black cats), and flying through the air to their subversive meetings with the devil.

Of special significance to the history of Halloween is this last component - the mass gathering of witches at the Sabbath, or Sabbat. Though widely exaggerated by its enemies, some historians have speculated that the Sabbat was an actual nocturnal gathering of thousands where peasants plotted popular revolts against ruling social enclosures.

Given the potentially subversive nature of these massive gatherings, it should be of no surprise then that the "witches" who attended became a target of extermination to the forces of order. Curiously, according to Morton, this is about the same period when a term closely resembling "Halloween" first begins to appear in the English language.

The choice of All Hallows' as a major holiday for witches and devils was no doubt coerced from the accused with a political agenda in mind. [...] A spectacular witch trial took place during the reign of the Protestant king James I: in 1590, dozens of Scots were accused of having attempted to prevent James from reaching his queen-to-be, Anne of Denmark, by gathering on Halloween night and then riding the sea in sieves while creating storms by tossing live cats tied to human body parts in the water. After the infamous North Berwick Witch Trials, as they were called, Halloween was forever to be firmly associated with witches, cats, cauldrons, brooms, and the Devil."

MISCHIEVOUS NIGHTS c. 1600-1900 CE

After this brutal erasure of an entire population and the undomesticated form of life that they represented, one can see a marked change in the culture surrounding the celebration of Halloween, particularly in its embrace of romance, parlor games, and tempered mischief in place of unbridled revolt. According to Rogers, one popular tradition of this era was a public

choral performance that encouraged marriage and procreation with refrains celebrating “the wise virgins awaiting the coming of the bridegroom.” These public affirmations of marriage also announced the beginning of the seasons of Christmas and misrule, a temporary period of permitted mischief wherein urban leaders were ritually usurped from power in mock coups by impersonated sheriffs and mayors.

Simultaneously in the countryside, according to a sixteenth century account written by Philip Stubbs, large groups of drunken revelers would parade the churchyards with their horses, singing and dancing “with such a confused noise that no man can here his own voice,” and demand contributions from their neighbors in order to continue their “Heathenrie, Devilrie, and Drunkenness.” According to David J. Skal, the author of *Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween*, it is also within this era that the tradition of the jack-o’-lantern develops, complete with a Christian folk etymology of harmless mischief:

Jack was a perennial trickster of folktales, who offended not only God but also the devil with his many pranks and transgressions. Upon his death, he was denied entrance into both heaven and hell, though the devil grudgingly tossed him a fiery coal, which Jack caught in a hollowed turnip and which would light his night-walk on earth until Judgement Day. Jack’s perpetual prank is decoying of hapless travelers into the murky mire.

In this new era of “civilized” Christianity, previous bloody wars between pagans and early Christians were replaced by relatively minor inter-religious skirmishes between Protestants and Catholics – that is, until November 5, 1605. Successfully recognized by its simple injunction to “Remember, remember the fifth of November!”, this was the day that Guy Fawkes, a Catholic malcontent, was caught placing thirty-six barrels of gunpowder in a vault beneath the protestant House of Lords, later known as the Gunpowder Plot.

Fawkes was soon publicly hanged as a Catholic traitor and the date of his failed attack was chosen by the Parliament as “a holiday forever in thankfulness to our God for deliverance and detestation for the Papists.” Halloween and Guy Fawkes Day/Bonfire Night (as it came to be dually known) co-existed peacefully for about 40 years until, in 1647, Parliament banned the celebration of all festivals excepting the anti-Catholic celebration. It was then, due to their relative proximity of one another, that No-

and Red scares. Yet beyond the zone of leftist agitation, it was also a decade of relative social peace, of continuing baby boom, of consumer affluence and suburban development. The 1960’s and 1970’s, however, posed new challenges to the social and political fabric of the United States. This was the era of civil rights agitation, of urban ghetto riots, of student and antiwar protest, of youth countercultures, of feminism and gay liberation, of Watergate. In the South, African-Americans defeated Jim Crow, but in the North they faced de facto resegregation as whites fled to the suburbs in the wake of rioting in Watts, Newark, and Detroit.

Within five years of The Great Rebellion, the composition of Detroit’s population had completely changed, producing a majority black inner city ringed by a hostile periphery of white suburbs. “In the aftermath of the riot,” As Ze’ev Chafets explains in his once controversial 1990 book *Devil’s Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit*, “Detroit became the national capital of disingenuous surprise. People suddenly discovered what should have been obvious – that beyond the glittering downtown, the leafy neighborhoods, the whirring computers, there was another city: poor, black, and angry” that “seethes with the resentments of postcolonial Africa.” This comparison was clearly not lost on those who would soon be tasked with recycling counterinsurgency measures developed against anti-colonial uprisings to be used against a new form of annual black insurgency – that of Devil’s Night.

Although 1983 is widely recognized as the official beginning of Devil’s Night because of its dramatic increase in dumpster fires, there is evidence to suggest that there was an already low-level insurgency associated with Halloween dating back to at least 1979 and, conceivably, to 1967 itself. It was only in 1984, probably due to a combination of the widespread media hype of the 1983 arsons and the World Series victory by the Detroit Tigers on October 31st, that there was a marked increase in *building* fires. With over 297 fires on October 30th alone, 1984’s Halloween season set the high water mark for destruction with “the worst fire scenes I’ve seen since the riots of 1967,” according to a former Detroit Fire Department chief.

This last statement should also not be overlooked, because within it is a glimpse of authorities’ conceptual framework for viewing Devil’s Night – that is, not as an isolated incident, but as an aftershock of The Great Rebellion that rivaled its destruction and, therefore, should be eligible for the same levels of counterinsurgency. But to do would require more than just a single comparison; it would require resorting to racist and supernatu-

and would soon prove to be a death knell for trick-or-treat, one of their children's last remaining sources of autonomy and comradery outside the family unit. Much in the way that authorities were forced to suppress the mischief they initially promoted in place of unbridled revolt, they now found themselves losing control over the unrestrained throngs of begging children that they created to replace the uncontrollable vandals before them. As Morton argues:

Given trick or treat's almost universal suburban popularity, its emphasis on representation of outsiders, and the way it empowered its participants, it was perhaps inevitable that trick or treat was about to experience a backlash. Adults, it seemed, were unwilling to grant their children that power after all. In 1964, a New York housewife named Helen Pfeil was upset at the number of trick or treaters whom she thought were too old to be demanding candy and handed them packages of dog biscuits, poisonous ant buttons, and steel wool. Within three years, the urban legend of children being given apples with hidden razor blades surfaced, and parents began to worry about Halloween.

Though only two deaths (both of which were later attributed to family members) and a small number of injuries were reported over two decades of "Halloween sadism," the media was quick to portray the holiday as rife with poison, satanic cults, and stranger danger. As one 1975 Newsweek article leading up to Halloween claimed,

If this year's Halloween follows form, a few children will return home with something more than just an upset tummy: in recent years, several children have died and hundreds have narrowly escaped injury from razor blades, sewing needles and shards of glass purposefully put into their goodies by adults.

Civic groups and churches again rushed to this opportunity for a decisive social enclosure, that is, of removing youth from the street once and for all. Across the continent, thousands of "alternatives to trick-or-treating" were suddenly being hosted at shopping malls, museums, zoos, schools, spook houses, and community centers while some hospitals continued to reinforce the paranoia of Halloween sadism by offering to x-ray the die-hard trick-or-treaters' candy for dangerous metal objects.

These "tales of Halloween sadism," Rogers eloquently argues,

were measured against the vision of a stable, congenial decade of trick-or-treating in the 1950's. This was a decade of Cold War politics

vember 5 began to take on many of the sinister and mischievous elements of Halloween. Young people would spend weeks preparing for the night by going house-to-house dressed in rags and demanding firewood or money for the massive bonfire roasts of Pope effigies that would come to define the night, a tradition that some historians consider as the origin of trick-or-treat, which will be discussed later. According to Rogers, if no firewood or money was given, it was "considered quite lawful to appropriate any old wood" from these households.

It also around this same time, according to Rogers, that the oldest recorded use of "Mischief Night" is noted by a headmaster to describe his school's theatre performance that ended in "an Ode to Fun which praises children's tricks on Mischief Night in most approving terms." Though originally celebrated on May 1, it eventually found its home on in Great Britain on November 4, the night before Bonfire Night, and later in the US on October 30. According to Rogers, it was during this transitional time that Halloween itself began to reappear in the British Isles as a festival distinct from Bonfire Night while still retaining some its most disorderly practices such the targeted destruction of private property, particularly by young, working class men in Scotland and Ireland.

He writes,

Mimicking the malignant spirits who were widely believed to be abroad on Halloween, gangs of youths blocked up chimneys, ram-paged cabbage patches, battered doors, unhinged gates, and un-stabled horses. In nineteenth-century Cromarty, revelers even sought out lone women whom they could haze as a witch. [...] 'If an individual happened to be disliked in the place,' observed one Scot in 1911, 'he was sure to suffer dreadfully on these occasions. He doors would be broken, and frequently not a cabbage left standing in the garden.' Such was Halloween reputation as a night of festive retribution that in some parts of Scotland the imperatives of community justice prevailed over private property, to a point that the Kirk-session found it impossible to enforce law and order.

These accounts of masculine mob attacks to deliver "community justice" to "unpopular" neighbors and "lone women" are not included as an endorsement for their obviously proto-fascist and misogynistic nature; instead, these moments illustrate how, by means of the witch-hunts and other violent forms of domestication, women had been excluded from the sphere of rebellion and continued to be a target of attack. It is also important

not to overlook these moments' qualities of *retribution and ungovernability* that will better situate the widespread vandalism of Irish-American immigrant youth and Detroit's prolific teenage arsonists.

BLACK HALLOWEEN, 1845-1945 CE

Much like the Black Plague of the fourteenth century, the potato blight of 1845 dramatically impacted the course of Halloween's evolution as it spread across Ireland, killing both the country's staple food crop and over one million Irish peasants from the resulting starvation. Over the course of the next seven years, one million more Irish would leave their homes, many sailing to North America where they soon outnumbered all other immigrant groups combined. It is not surprising then that this is also the context in which that Halloween celebrations and revelry, long disdained by earlier Puritan settlers, begin to appear in the United States. As Lesley Pratt Bannatyne writes in her book *Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History*, "Wherever the Irish went, [...] Halloween followed along."

In their new homes across North America, Irish immigrant youth continued to experiment, innovate, and spread new forms of devilry during the Halloween season, often creatively adapting to the idiosyncrasies of each environment. In some Midwestern towns, this took the form of removing farmers' gates to free their animals, while on the East Coast, this took the form of weaponizing the relatively abundant supply of cabbages. Lamenting that "gangs of hoodlums throng[ing] the streets" had replaced the "kindly old customs" with "the spirit of rowdyism," William Shepard Walsh, a nineteenth-century historian details that:

Mischievous boys push the pith from the stalk, fill the cavity with tow which they set on fire, and then through the keyholes of houses of folk who have given them offence blow darts of flame a yard in length. [...] If on Halloween a farmer's or crofter's kail-yard still contains ungathered cabbages, the boy and girls of the neighborhood descend upon it en masse, and the entire crop is harvested in five minutes' time and thumped against the owner's doors, which rattle as though pounded by a thunderous tempest."

In keeping with Halloween's long tradition of liminality, Tad Tuleja posits in his essay *Trick or Treat: Pretexts and Contexts* that these attacks on rural households:

ing store. The incident quickly widened into full-scale looting throughout the entire neighborhood. Sidney Fine, in his book *Violence in the Model City*, recorded accounts from witnesses that described this moment as possessing a "carnival atmosphere" of multiracial looting, in which the police were totally outnumbered and were forced to watch this "gleefulness in throwing stuff and getting stuff out of buildings" from a careful distance. By the next afternoon, the first fire had been set at a nearly grocery store and a small mob blocked a firetruck from putting out the flames. According to historian Herb Colling, the local media initially refused to report on the unrest for fear of it spreading to other parts of the city, but the unavoidable smoke of a burning Detroit soon began to fill the city's skyline.

Over the next 24 hours, the fires and looting spread across the entire city targeting both black and white-owned businesses, notably resulting in 38 handguns and 2,498 rifles being appropriated by the rebels. In response, President Johnson was forced to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 that could authorize the use federal troops to put down an insurrection against the U.S. Government. Beginning at 1:30am on July 25th, over 8000 Michigan Army National Guardsman and 4700 U.S. Army paratroopers descended upon the city to violently put down the uprising. In the following three days, countless horrors of brutality, sexual assault, and assassination were visited upon those who continued to fight against the forces of order.

By July 28th, after the last fire has been set, the troops began to slowly withdraw from the city and authorities began to survey the damage. All told, the five-day period between July 23-28 resulted in 2509 stores being looted or burned, 7231 arrests, 1189 injuries, and 43 deaths, 33 of whom were black residents. Unlike the 1943 Detroit race riot, however, observers noted a high participation of white residents in looting stores, setting fires, and sniping cops which raised questions about whether the uprising could be simply categorized as a 'race riot.' The Great Rebellion, as it came to be known instead, set off a wave of unrest that would continue to spread to over two dozen cities and return to Detroit the following year after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is following this period of social upheaval and counterinsurgency that one finds the development of a diffuse anxiety within the white population over "inner city issues," and their subsequent mass exodus to the suburban peripheries, later known as *white flight*. In these shiny new refugee camps for the white middle class, an alienating fear of the Other lingered

ging ritual was modeled for millions of youngsters in the early fifties by Donald Duck's nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie in Disney's animated cartoon 'Trick or Treat,' accompanied by a catchy, reinforcing song of the same title.

In addition to promoting trick-or-treat as a subtle alternative, Rogers also cites this specific Donald Duck cartoon as a propaganda piece critical for "the taming of Halloween," explaining that "rather than experience real-life shenanigans, children could find them in a Walt Disney cartoon." By the late 1950's the enmity that had come to define October 31st had been almost completely supplanted with a fabricated ethic of consumption, whether in the form of candy or experiences. This "generation by models of a real without origin or reality," as Jean Baudrillard conceived of a hyperreality, was apparently so effective that one police sergeant in Los Angeles publicly expressed his confusion about the disappearance of teenage rebels after an oddly peaceful Halloween in 1959.

Of course, these measures were not applied uniformly across the entire continent, and in some places the destruction previously associated with Halloween were simply displaced to the day before, on October 30th. As Rogers recorded of an older man's proud remarks of his boyhood in Hoboken, New Jersey, "there was only mischief. The adult world could not buy us off with candy or shiny pennies. They didn't even try." In these small pockets of lingering mischief, particularly in the newly developed suburbs of the period, the vandalism took on a decidedly less class-conscious tone, reverting to a previous form of pranks that targeted "unpopular" or stingy neighbors by smashing their pumpkins or stealing their gate. And because of their relative isolation to one another, many of the areas developed hyper-localized terms for their own sports, like Vermont's *Cabbage Night*, Montreal's *Mat Night*, upstate New York's *Gate Night*, New Jersey's *Mischief Night*, and Detroit's infamous *Devil's Night*.

THE DEMONIZATION OF HALLOWEEN, c. 1967-PRESENT

On July 23rd, 1967, after the police raided a party for two returning Vietnam GIs at an illegal speakeasy on the Near West Side of Detroit, crowds made up mostly of black residents soon gathered outside and began throwing bottles and stones in retaliation. The police were forced to retreat and the remaining crowd quickly seized the opportunity to pillage a nearby cloth-

may be seen as an attack on domestic borders. The majority of popular pranks were 'threshold tricks' that assaulted, if only temporarily, ordered space. [...] Buggies, which provided cohesion to far-flung rural communities were 'dysfunctionalized' by being placed on barn roofs. Even the popular custom of tipping over outhouses served metonymically as an attack on the house-as-home.

Though many of these mischievous deeds against rural neighbors were treated with a wide berth of tolerance by the authorities of the day, the tactics of urban immigrant youth soon sharpened and escalated to the alarm (and beyond the control) of fledgling police forces, taking on a character resembling something closer to asymmetric urban warfare. After the collapse of the American stock market on October 24th, 1929 (or *Black Tuesday*, as it came to be known), the next few years saw Halloween mobs specifically targeting symbols of luxury and the infrastructure of the metropolis, with a notable peak in 1933 (uncoincidentally at the height of America's Great Depression) that came to be known as *Black Halloween*.

According to multiple accounts by Lisa Morton, Nicholas Rogers, and David Skal, this period was marked by youth gangs ripping down street signs, sawing down telephone poles, opening fire hydrants, disabling streetlights, barricading streets with stolen gates and refuse, dragging tree stumps onto railroad tracks, removing manhole covers, tearing up the boards of wooden sidewalks, smashing storefront windows, holding shopkeepers hostage, unhooking poles from the tops of streetcars, spreading grease on trolley car tracks, putting empty barrels over church steeples, attacking the police, and burning "almost anything they could set afire." Rogers adds that as the celebration of Halloween started to spread westward, so did these flames. In 1908, anonymous vandals in Belton, Texas burned several freight cars, houses, and 1000 bales of cotton which in total cost the city upwards of \$6 million in today's money, when adjusted for inflation.

Many of these attacks were focused around immobilizing the movement of commerce through the metropolis but specifically, as Rogers observes, "the new symbol of prosperity, the automobile, became the object of destruction. Revelers soaped windows, deflated tires, and at busy intersections unceremoniously 'bounced' cars, or rocked them from the back to the discomfort of the passengers." Skal also notes the class antagonism to be found within these accounts, adding that,

one report took special notice that a car overturned by a 'mass attack' of hoodlums was a 'sedan of expensive make.' The stucco of Ameri-

ca's social contract was likewise severely chipped by the time Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, and in a small way, the customs of Halloween pranking reflected more generalized anxieties about civil unrest.

Skal goes on to write, in a notable account of multiracial rebellion, that

on Halloween 1934, the pranks of masked children parading through the streets of Harlem rapidly escalated from harmless flour and ask pelting to rock throwing to automobile vandalism. The police estimated that four hundred youngsters, both black and white, were involved in the various melees, which culminated with a car being heisted and rolled down a fifty-foot embankment in Riverside Park, where its tires were slashed.

Though it would be pleasant to imagine that these sorts of multiracial conspiracies were common in this period, it should not be surprising that not only was this rare, but actually antithetical to many of Roger's accounts of non-white participation in these mobs. In fact, three years earlier on Halloween night of 1931, a violent street battle developed between 400 black and white adults on the same streets of Harlem. As urban youth began to materially sabotage the fragile economy, white mob attacks began to develop into larger race riots, and widespread looting overtook the Halloween celebration of the 1934 World's Fair in Chicago, it was not to be long before the forces of order would have to once again intervene to restore order to the holiday.

THE TAMING OF HALLOWEEN, c. 1945–1960

After three decades of annual insurgency by tireless immigrant youth, it became obvious to authorities that the rebellious spirit of Halloween had to be severed from the holiday once and for all. As Skal writes, *“although Halloween never even registered in the national debate, the many local controversies surrounding the holiday echoed much larger political themes about anarchy, order, and wealth distribution.”* He continues, citing the accidental death of a young girl (after her dress caught fire from a Jack-o'-Lantern) as another source of public unease regarding Halloween, which,

to many observers, seemed nothing but an invitation and excuse for social disaster. Fear of a seething underclass was a strong sub-

text of other reform movements of the early 1930's; film censorship campaigns, for example, got especially worked up about the Halloweenish content of horror and crime movies, each genre anarchic in its own way. Such entertainments were widely viewed as demoralizing threats to public order, October 31 all year long.

This particular passage is striking because it likens to the desperate counter-revolutionary concessions of the Roosevelt's New Deal with the concerted efforts to “civilize” Halloween by police, schools, politicians, churches, and civil groups. While this certainly took on forms of updated strategies from previous centuries – erasure in the form of film censorship, romance as costume balls, *parlor games* as church lock-ins, and so on – it also presented a newly available option in the post-Depression era: *consumption*. Rogers explains that “by making Halloween consumer-oriented and infantile, civic and industrial promoters hoped to eliminate its anarchic features. By making it neighborly and familial, they strove to re-appropriate public space from the unorthodox and ruffian and restore social order to the night of 31 October.”

Though there is evidence that Halloween rebels were being bought off with candy as early as 1920, it is not until after the Halloween unrest of the mid-1930's and post-WW2 production boom that we begin to see trick-or-treat being explicitly promoted as a tangible solution to restore order to the reviled holiday.

The precise origins of the tradition itself are disputed by some historians, but many agree that it partially arose from Depression-era “house-to-house parties” that some neighbors would co-operatively host on Halloween to save money. Morton notes that one of the first national mentions of the term “trick-or-treat” can be found in a 1939 article entitled *A Victim of the Window Soaping Brigade?*, which specifically names the practice as “a method of subverting rowdy pranking.”

“Whatever its specific sources, inspirations, or influences,” writes Skal, trick-or-treating “became widely known and adopted as a distinct property protection strategy during the late Depression.” However, he continues,

it is the postwar years that are generally regarded as the glorious heyday of trick-or-treating. Like the consumer economy, Halloween itself grew by leaps and bounds. Major candy companies like Curtiss and Brach, no longer constrained by sugar rationing, launched national advertising campaigns specifically aimed at Halloween. [...] The beg-