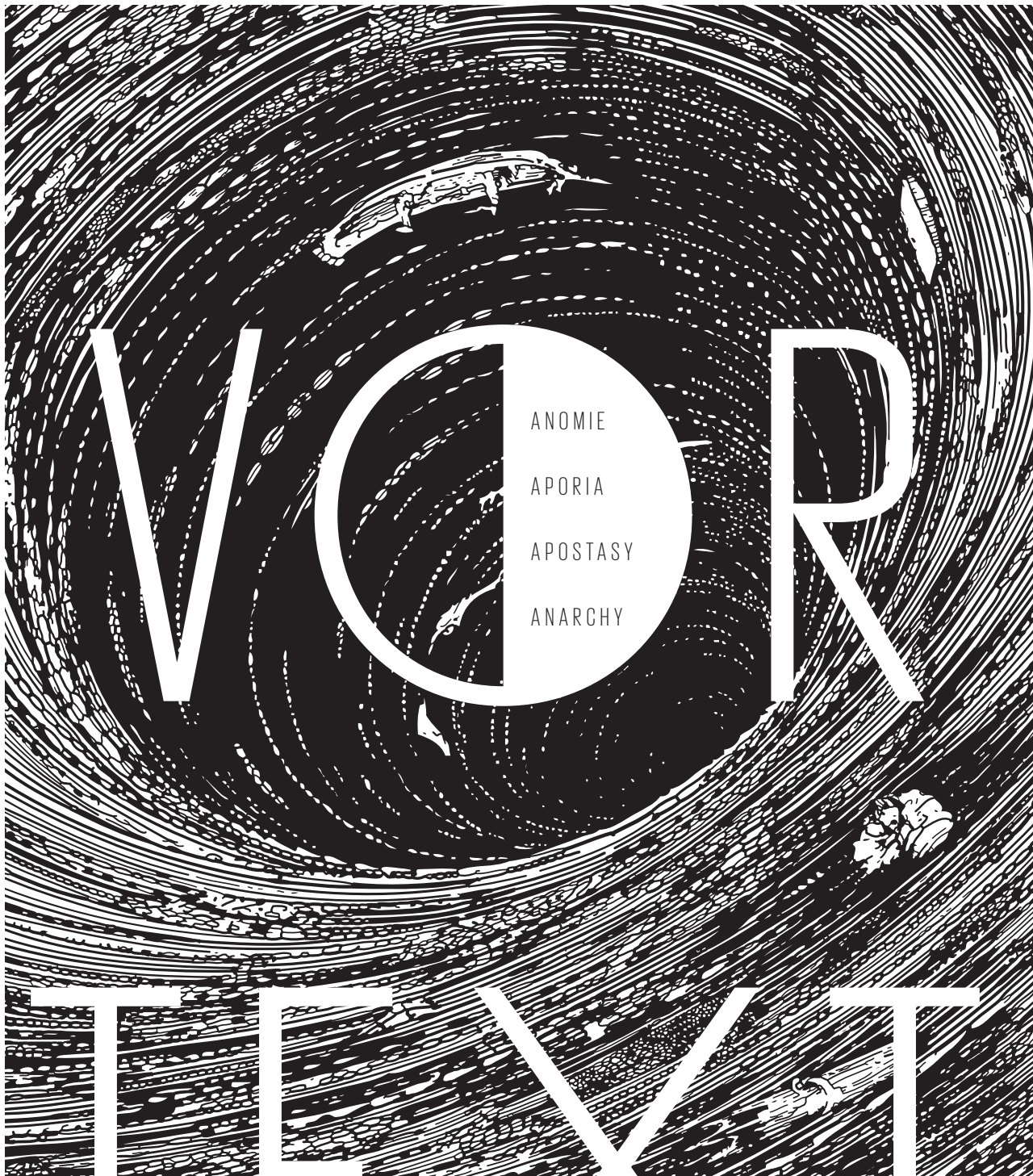


UNCONSCIOUS ORGAN OF THE EXPERIMENTAL COMMITTEE



WOR

ANOMIE  
APORIA  
APOSTASY  
ANARCHY

THYNT



---

REVOLUTIONARIES HAVE ONLY SOUGHT  
TO CHANGE THE WORLD. THE POINT, HOWEVER,  
IS TO DESTROY IT

---

# "TO ME, CHIMAERAS!"



FOR ENCAPUCHADXS & ΚΟΥΚΟΥΛΟΦΟΡΟΙ

*For revolt  
without object or  
measure*

*Towards the  
destructive  
nothing*





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## THE ALLEGED

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Abstractor of the Quintessence—Biofilo Panclasta  
Supernumerary—Netochka Nezvanova  
Silent Audio—No Future No Mercy

MIDNIGHT  
ON  
SEPT  
EMBER II



IN PRAISE  
OF THE  
JUMPER

IT'S MIDNIGHT ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2011, ten years after the World Trade Center attack. We're walking down the train tracks, each carrying a scale model of one of the twin towers. Gravel crunches under our shoes. The cardboard buildings are taller than we are; tiny bodies dangle from the windows, rapping against the hollow walls at each step. The full moon shines down from the top of the sky, making a tremendous stage of the world with our tiny silhouettes in the center: Quixote and Panza, Vladimir and Estragon.

Along with his building, my friend carries a placard inscribed with a manifesto:

### ***In Praise of the Jumper***

*Whether they hit the ground with a thud or burned up midair  
choking on dust as the world collapsed around them, we knew  
immediately these jumpers had joined the experimentation commit-  
tee. Trapped between flames and clouds, they chose to fly.*

*In the face of hellish peril, they chose action and defiance  
even knowing the apocalypse had come. Would that only we could  
find the same courage, just once, in the crisis that now consumes  
us. Amidst the everyday wreckage of this society, this emptiness  
and boredom, futility and meaninglessness—to jump, along with  
all those who have ever jumped, with just one grain of faith  
that we shall fly.*

*I wish I could have joined those jumpers, everything in flames  
and a beautiful sky and a hundred stories in free fall screaming:*

***Long Live Death!***

Whether this is what we “really think” is beside the point; there are American flags hanging from every telephone pole from here to the Mexican border. Our task is to interrupt this pat narrative, this *kitsch*—not only in the geography of our town but also in our own servile acceptance of it. It would be extremely inconvenient for us to get stopped in the course of erecting our little monument; I have a suspended sentence from felony riot charges, while my comrade's felony riot case has yet to go to court. But that's what we're here for: the risk is the payoff. For this brief moment, we are paragons of transgression, heedless of risk or rule, filling our pockets with firecrackers to jump into the fire. We have joined *the Experimentation Committee*.

# ALL-POINTS BULLETIN: BEWARE THE EXPERIMENTATION COMMITTEE!

"YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO EXPERIENCE FREEDOM IN ORDER TO BE FREE. YOU NEED TO FREE YOURSELF IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE FREEDOM. WITHIN THE PRESENT SOCIAL ORDER, TIME AND SPACE PREVENT THE **EXPERIMENTATION OF FREEDOM** BECAUSE THEY SUFFOCATE THE FREEDOM TO EXPERIMENT. ONLY BY UPSETTING THE IMPERATIVES OF TIME AND SOCIAL SPACE WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO IMAGINE NEW RELATIONS AND SURROUNDINGS. THE OLD PHILOSOPHER SAID ONE CAN ONLY DESIRE ON THE BASIS OF WHAT ONE KNOWS. DESIRES CAN ONLY CHANGE IF ONE CHANGES THE LIFE THAT PRODUCES THEM."

-ANONYMOUS, AT DAGGERS DRAWN



**I***fit works*, it's obsolete. Real innovation rarely comes from the successful—those who have something to lose can't afford to stumble about at random. On the contrary, it comes from the ones who have their hands free: lunatics, ne'er-do-wells, outsiders, MAXIMUM ULTRAISTS.

In sleepy backwaters far from academia's ivory towers, teenagers improvise munitions and Wright brothers invent airplanes. Most never achieve fame, not even of the fifteen-minute variety. They don't contribute to the sort of progress recorded by historians—incremental, linear, triumphalist. They aren't part of an *avant-garde*: that presupposes a direction, when it is precisely the refusal of direction that enables them to make their discoveries.

Some call this play. Others call it folk science. We call it *the Experimentation Committee*.

The Experimentation Committee doesn't hold yearly conventions or award laurels. For the most part, it is comprised of people who never meet each other. It is not a membership organization but a secret society of the elect, which one may join only by departing from all that is familiar. It is a tunnel of darkness, a cocoon in which one becomes *another*.

Joining the Experimentation Committee is not only a matter of experimenting in *means*, but also in ends: not just acting according to values, but, as Nietzsche put it, *revaluating* them.<sup>1</sup> This kind of behavior is no walk in the park. Those who have chosen a project or direction can at least evaluate their success according to an external measure; without this convenience, there is no staving off self-doubt and existential crises. The Experimentation Committee is not for the faint of heart.

When you understand something, you *know* less, for you no longer see the field of possibilities. People are only likely to break new ground when they don't understand how something works, when they *imitate without mastery or comprehension*. In this regard, the internet may actually be a barrier to innovation—it tends spread identical copies, not unique imitations.

1. When economists re-value a currency, they do so in relation to *other* currencies; thus one may simply understand Nietzsche as proposing that we reevaluate traditional values relative to other values. But we can also imagine him to be arguing for a way of thinking and living that *produces new values*. As he says, one must have chaos within oneself to give birth to a dancing star.

*If you aren't sure what we mean, hurry—cease reading this instant and compose your own text expressing whatever you can imagine we might mean. Only thus will you have any hope of generating something new.*

Abstract theoretical considerations about what is needed rarely bear fruit; more often, people discover innovations by trying things at random until one works, albeit to achieve a previously unsought end. Only then do the theoreticians catch up, explaining why it works and why its results are desirable. This suggests that innovators should prioritize wide-ranging experimentation, even at random, over carefully-crafted hypotheses. *New strategies arise from new tactics*, not vice versa.

To participate in the Experimentation Committee, one must go beyond merely insisting that “another world is possible,” unless perhaps it is the other world depicted by Jean Ignace Isidore Gerard (as “J.J. Grandville”). Rather, one must “remain impossible as long as those who are now possible remain possible,” as Bakunin put it: the point is not to legitimize even the outlandish as realistic, but to abolish reality as we know it.

All of us have been part of the Experimentation Committee at some point in our lives—at least long enough to become anarchists, antinomians, or whatever it is you are that explains why you’re reading this. Yet like the reference points for anarchist revolution, our examples of bona fide participation in the

Committee are largely mythological.

Let’s start with the Situationists in their younger days, *drifting* around Europe, investing their *chance encounters* with meaning, before they became so fucking ideological. From their *dérives* we derive the principle that the Experimentation Committee must wander rather than seek.<sup>2</sup>

Every cup that runneth over, everyone who exceeds his role—who *goes beyond*—qualifies for membership. We count Subcommandante Marcos of the EZLN among the Experimentation Committee not because he participated in a revolutionary uprising but because he found time in the midst of it to write children’s stories about a talking beetle. This ski-masked Scheherazade, desperately sending out tales of Durito from his muddy camp in hopes of maintaining enough liberal attention to escape massacre for another week, cannot fail to touch our hearts even when his politics do not.

If the French gang Os Cangaceiros really did squat a top-dollar condominium—rather than the usual abandoned warehouse—solely in order to provoke a police attack, that also qualifies as the requisite *excess*.

---

2.

“Aimless is my song. Yes, aimless

As is love and life,

And creator and creation.”

-Heinrich Heine



It is often very difficult to mobilize support for Experimentation Committee arrestees.

Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz are first-round draft picks. Playing free jazz isn't enough, but Sun Ra qualifies. Punk bands like Contropotere and Gism almost make the cut, but Creation Is Crucifixion enlisted when they started reprogramming video games in addition to playing hardcore. Voyna seems inspiring, though our Russian comrades report—not surprisingly—that they're assholes. Neither Marinetti nor any other marionette of state or capital has a damn thing to do with the Committee.

The Experimentation Committee claims the death rattles of sacred cows as its national anthem. The Experimentation Committee strikes fear into the hearts of all who earnestly wish to succeed. The Experimentation Committee is an unquenchable fountain of youth, ceaselessly replenishing the world despite all our efforts to seal it up. Join up or *run for fucking cover.*

### **Blistering Critique:**

This makes a case for unproductive experimentation according to the logic of progress and productivity. To make an argument against them, it would be necessary to show that innovation and progress are actually opposing forces.

# COMRADES— SURELY IT IS TOO LATE, BUT WE NEEDED YOU FOR THE EXPERI MENTATION COM MITTEE!

To join—and thus contribute to prospective future issues of this publication—mail one of the following to:

**VOÖÖRTEXT**  
vortext@crimethinc.com  
P.O. Box 494  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
USA



👁️ A homemade “Was-passiert-dann-Maschine”

👁️ A book report (approx. 1000 words) on one of these works: Max Ernst, *La Femme 100 Têtes*; Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma*; Oswald de Andrade [no relation], *Cannibal Manifesto*; Luigi Serafini, *Codex Seraphinianus*; the five books of Rabelais; the so-called Voynich Manuscript

👁️ A performance piece or work of art with one of these titles:

God Punishes the NYPD

Nihilist Rube Goldberg Machine

Judith Butler Does Battle with the Hydra of Gender

The Suicide of Barack Obama

Dead Letter from the 1980s

Red Herring

Cat with Moth Wings

Crime or Miracle: A Complete Human Being

Lucifer Abandons Cain to His Fate

Satan's Daughter Liberty Invokes His Assistance in Storming the Bastille

No Artist—No Title

The City Was a Hunchback, Sinister at Dusk

Weapons for Children

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

The Sound of Tiny Hatchets

Unload the Drum Machine!

Bid for Popularity

Trojan Horse

👁️ The head of Rebecca Solnit, dead or alive

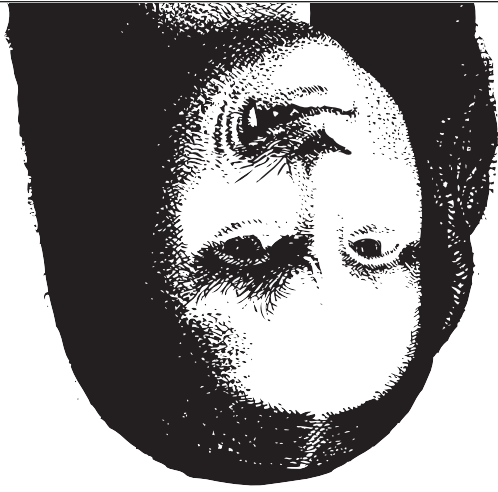
👁️ An oneiric history of the anti-globalization movement, i.e., a chronicle consisting entirely of selections recounted from the participants' dreams and nightmares

👁️ An ethnography comparing the role narcotics trafficking has surreptitiously played in Denmark's Christiania to its function in maintaining zones in US ghettos that are antagonistic to policing and gentrification—OR—a historical study explaining why the punk rock subculture put down roots in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines but not in India or Bangladesh, and how this relates to the worldwide resurgence of anarchist ideas at the turn of the century

👁️ We demand that Diamanda Galás prepare her own translation of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle!* We demand that Alejandro Jodorowsky learn lithography in order to illustrate it! We demand that Evergreen State College award an honorary degree—in absentia, if necessary—to the miscreants who stole Leon Trotsky's ashes and baked them into cookies!

👁️ The Federal Aviation Administration believes it is possible for an unarmed individual of any age or stature to hijack an airplane using a single bottle of tap water or tube of toothpaste. This seems to be very valuable information indeed. Figure out how this is done and report to us.

*Those who fulfill demands made in the name of the Experimentation Committee earn the right to make such demands of others. A cursory review of the contents of this publication should hint at the potential therein. **Expand the Committee!***



***PASSIONISM, CONSONANCE,  
TERRIBLE FREEDOM***

A LIBRETTO ○

FOR TWO PERFORMERS

INTRODUCING THREE NEW ○ CONCEPTS



Our notions of what constitutes a “good” presentation are so constrained by the norms and expectations of the genre that they have become disconnected from any concrete measure of effectiveness, let alone the question of what is fulfilling for attendees—or *pleasurable* for the presenters!

So?

An extravagant refusal!

A departure from the norm!

*An experimental exercise in freedom!*

...in which we may discover much that is routine.

Perhaps so! But a girl can dream!

To borrow from Mario de Andrade, “I went to the conference with the intention of seeing old friends, taking in a workshop or two, distributing a few pamphlets, going out for drinks, and *setting off a bomb in the middle of the world.*”

So let’s get down to business! We’ll start at the beginning: why are you an anarchist? No—don’t answer! Too easy, too conservative! Better—what is your sole reason for living?

For living? Hm... I suppose I’ve always felt that the only possible justification for life was *to experience intense passion.*

Aha, *passion!* Yes, when a burning desire seizes you—

—yes, seizes—

—and *commands you*—

—oh yes, *commands!*—

—then and only then, you feel that life has meaning, that you know

why you are on this earth...

It's true! How did you—

*Overwhelming* passion—*tyrannical* passion! Some anarchist you are! Life is meaningless unless you have something to *obey*.

You scoundrel! Didn't I read in your own—

And like any master, when you look at it up close it isn't pretty. Do you think, for example, that passion will bring you happiness?

Do I? Well...

Many anarchists claim they're fighting for a better world, and attribute their unhappiness to the state of this one. Nonsense—we don't fight in order to achieve happiness, but to indulge our passion for fighting! Is the point of revolution to create happiness? By the time we bring about a revolution, we revolutionaries will be unable to enjoy it. Think of what it takes to accomplish such a thing—injuring oneself to hardship and tragedy, learning to find fulfillment in suffering! No, the last people to fight for revolution are those who want happiness. We fight to *escape* it!

OK, I'll try out your narrative. Let's say a revolutionary is someone who simply cannot tolerate the world as it exists. How can we be sure that this is actually a response to the way the world is, rather than to something internal? "Passionism as pathology!"

Exactly. And listen—every lover knows that the greater the obstacles, the greater the passion. That's what desire is *for*. In evolutionary terms, we don't have desires in order that we may fulfill them and be happy, but as a force to propel us. That's why desire increases in proportion to the difficulty of its object: a misfortune for most of us, but a boon for romantic poets.

So if great passion is provoked by tremendous obstacles, we can see why a passionist would become an anarchist rather than a democrat.



Right—party politics is too *easy*. The passionist gravitates to something more difficult and dangerous. In the extreme case, what you're calling passionism becomes a sort of will to nothingness: pursuing things that do not and perhaps cannot exist, the passionist risks ceasing to exist himself. Picture the insurgent at the end of the uprising, the night before he's taken to the guillotine, reflecting that all his life he has pursued an ideal that did not exist and now he is going to join it—in nonexistence.

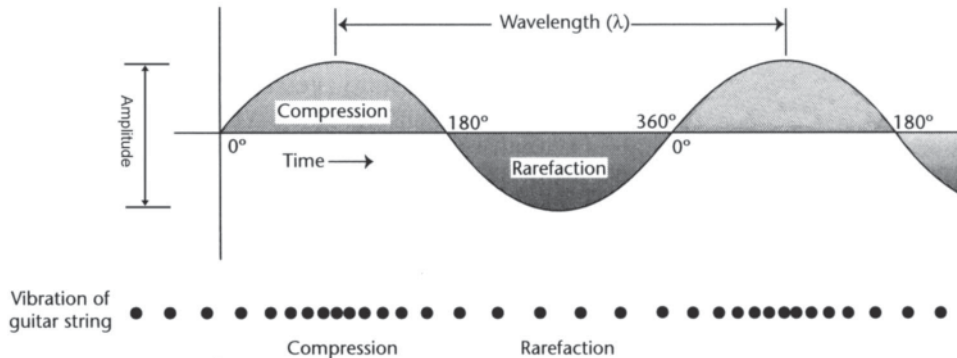
OK, I'm convinced of your framework, but I think your critique misses something. The point of existence isn't just to achieve happiness or have an easy life—for the passionist, for example, the pursuit of passion alone, including tremendous suffering and tribulation, is an end unto itself.

Obviously! The question is whether that's the sort of *end* we want to come to.

But hear me out: passionism isn't just masochism or self-destructiveness; it's something else. Passionists aspire to the maximum *amplitude* of life.

As an aging punk, I guess I have to get behind that, but—

Let me explain what I mean. When you graph a sound wave, you have the neutral state and a curved line that departs up from it, returns down, crosses the neutral line and goes below it a proportionate depth, and then returns up to the neutral line. The louder a sound is, the higher both the peaks and the valleys of the sound wave, while softer sounds only travel a short distance from the neutral line. Sticking to the line, of course, is silence. The distance from the neutral line is called amplitude, popularly known as volume.



You're making volume analogous to depth of emotional experience. Can you tie this back into anarchist struggle?

Imagine that the goal of the state is silence, zero amplitude—that's what they call "security" and "stability." Intense volume is threatening to the system, the defenders of which attempt to maintain a so-called *happy medium* at all costs.

I'm not sure I agree—I think the state is more focused on *directing* our emotional affects than minimizing them. But finish your account of anarcho-passionism.

So the passionist is committed to living life as far as possible from neutral silence in both directions—that's why it's not just masochism. The most ecstatic soaring heights and the corresponding crushing depths of despair! They're both part of a whole that comes from rejecting stability and quiet—and this inherently brings us into conflict with power. The placid, passionless security of low-amplitude life can be compared to an EKG meter: when the line goes flat, that means death.

IF SILENCE EQUALS DEATH, does that mean VOLUME EQUALS LIFE? I admit, I want to live a life that's turned up to 11—but most people don't want anything of the sort. Why do some people become passionist maniacs while others end up well-adjusted branch managers?

Well, we're positing that passionism is a matter of temperament, right? That lines up with this theory of *consonance* I've been developing. Consonance means "sounding together," the pleasant sensation of tones vibrating in harmony with each other. Where one finds consonance is determined in part by one's temperament. Let's go back to our example of the sound wave. When you temper a piano, you adjust the intervals between the notes, which affects how the notes harmonize. Different temperaments produce different consonances and dissonances between notes; equal temperament, in which the octave consists of twelve equal semitones, is only one of many possibilities.

OK, I follow, but where are you going?

If we too have different temperaments, it means that the things that *resonate* with us—that make us feel consonance or dissonance—vary according to how we've been tempered, how our lives have "tuned" us. Passionism is a comparatively rare temperament; it's not the primary mode through which most people seem to experience consonance. They might experience it in giving and receiving orders, for example—the feeling that "everything is in its place." This explains why when we do outreach modeled on what drew us to anarchism it doesn't draw the rest of humanity the same way.

No kidding.

Anarchists have concluded that the root of our experience of dissonance is *hierarchy*. That sentiment comes intuitively to young rebels, but your average branch manager probably experiences anarchy as dissonance—not just on the level of bias or ideology, but as a deep-seated emotional reaction.

If I get your metaphor, temperament isn't just a matter of what resonates with us on an item-by-item basis, but how the intervals make different "chords" resonate.

Certain piano temperaments work really well for playing in, say, F major, but sound terrible in C minor. Carry the metaphor over: two people can encounter the same songs—the same raw material,

whether you interpret that strictly as sensory stimuli or broadly as social reality—but experience them as pleasurable or unpleasant according to their temperaments. This is a way to explain why two people can grow up in the same society, witnessing the same things and watching the same films or whatever, yet still react totally differently.

So an anarcho-passionist might find that a bread-based diet, sleeping on hardwood floors, and fighting for lost causes produces a feeling of consonance, while another person might experience it as dissonance, finding that lost causes go better with white lace wedding gowns...

To take this further, we can imagine socialization as a massive set of pliers twisting the tuning pegs of our hearts into frequency with the vibration of patriarchy, or something like that.

Hm... it *is* true that I've never liked anything in a major key.

How tragic! The anarchist living in a capitalist world—he thought he only liked *sad music*.

Sad but true.

Some of my thinking about this came out of my efforts to understand gender: what the difference is between male, man, masculine, and butch, for instance. I think masculine and feminine are aesthetics—that is, constellations of traits, inclinations, colors and shapes and sizes and smells, all sorts of aesthetic qualities that coalesce along certain frequencies. One's internal temperament might resonate more or less consonantly with masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and various other gender constructs—and these resonances can be consonant or dissonant with one's body and assigned sex.

Hence the ways we identify.

Yes. But I agree with Eve Sedgwick that masculinity and femininity are orthogonal: a person can be masculine or feminine, or both, or neither, all at once. The problem lies in thinking that the boxes

“M” and “F” encompass all meaningful human characteristics, that all possible personalities cohere around these two aesthetics and are divided between them. I can imagine all sorts of lovely constellations of traits besides our current notions of masculinity and femininity—there are different masculinities and femininities in different cultures, after all. These are just shorthands for patterns that unfortunately get bound up with systems of sex, gender, power, and privilege.

So in this account, is *freedom* simply a matter of being able to pursue your own version of consonance without interference? I can see how mainstream gay rights advocates might push that line, but it seems to let the self-satisfied branch manager off the hook.

[Audience plant:] But—what about—**TERRIBLE FREEDOM?**

[All, aghast:] *What's that?*

OK... remember when you came out and it broke up your marriage and destroyed your family? It was like the parable of Achilles and the Tortoise: the Tortoise asks Achilles if he's free, and Achilles says that yes, as a powerful hero he's free to do anything—so the Tortoise demands that Achilles kill him, his best friend, and Achilles realizes just how constrained he is by *who he is*, and how awful the freedom that waits beyond those constraints is. It was like that—only you *had* to kill everything you loved, you had to wreck your life and the lives of your loved ones. The shock and horror, but also the infinite feeling of possibility and weightlessness that flowed through your veins at that moment when your hands were wet with blood—that was **TERRIBLE FREEDOM**.

[stunned silence]

When you break with everything you know, consonance and dissonance be damned, that's TERRIBLE FREEDOM. It means wrenching yourself out of your routines, your commitments, your values. We *always* possess the capacity to do this, but it's unthinkable except in the most extreme circumstances.

I guess when I think about it, all the most important experiences, from that first unpermitted march to parenthood and death, are beyond the scope of anything we could rationally choose, let alone be prepared for. Whether or not we *want* them in advance can't be the right question when those experiences transform our very wishes.

To tie this back to our earlier topic, perhaps one of the reasons you and I are passionists is that we've both had intense experiences in which *pursuing our desires* forced us into a freedom we couldn't have dared on our own. This is why nothing is sweeter to us than tyrannical passion: it doesn't just impose meaning on an opaque world, it also liberates us from it.

You're saying we're faithful not to our specific passions, but to passion itself—because it is a master that has been able to set us free.

Yes—to free us from *ourselves*, when nothing else could. To drag us into that space in which “nothing is true, everything is permitted,” as the supposed Hassan-i Sabbāh quote goes.

This poses an uncomfortable question: to what extent do we have to make choices that are difficult or even abhorrent to us in order to experience real freedom?

Right—freedom may be the *last* thing we want. Remember what Alfredo Bonanno wrote about leaving prison: “The instant you get out of prison you have the sense that you are leaving something dear to you. Why? Because you know that you are leaving a part of your life inside, because you spent some of your life there which, even if it was under terrible conditions, is still a part of you. And even if you lived it badly and suffered horribly, which is not always

the case, it is always better than the nothing that your life is reduced to the moment it disappears.”

It's not always so easy to isolate the irony in our fear of the unknown.

Somewhere else, he reports that it's more terrifying to be on the run from the police than to be in prison—that is to say, *consequences are less frightening than risks*. Anyone who has suffered a sleepless night before an action knows this! This isn't just because uncertainty is the most unendurable condition, but also because we're afraid of being responsible for failing—of being responsible, period. Of *freedom*.

So in your formulation, the task of the anarchist is to win both *first-order* freedom—the liberty to do as we choose—and second-order freedom, TERRIBLE FREEDOM, transforming the conditions that constitute our choices.

Anarchism as ideology—what you're calling first-order freedom—is familiar to us: it's the commonsense notion that we should be free to live in accordance with our wishes. Self-determination. But anarchism as method—the pursuit of *TERRIBLE FREEDOM*—refuses to take the wishes as given; it challenges the “self” in self-determination.

In short, the pursuit of first-order freedom means *taking* control of our lives, while the pursuit of TERRIBLE FREEDOM means *abolishing* it. Freedom exists in a dialectic between asserting our interests and reinventing them.

Now check this out: if the anarchist project were just about defending and extending first-order freedom, we would have little to say to those who experience consonance in hierarchy. But insofar as we champion TERRIBLE FREEDOM, we set out to interrupt that consonance, to subvert the processes through which people currently find joy and meaning in life, starting with ourselves. This is not a clean or simple project.

Right, it's not an easy banner to rally people around. It's not the "Grand March" Milan Kundera talks about in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*—"from revolution to revolution, from struggle to struggle, ever onward." It's not progress towards something laudable or even defined. It's something darker, scarier.

Anarchism is a contradiction: it's simultaneously a platform and a practice of overturning platforms. As partisans of TERRIBLE FREEDOM, we fight for the right to our complications—to all the forces contending within us—to transformation *especially* when it's painful, even horrifying. We can imagine that every banner at the front of a black bloc, regardless of what simplistic slogan is painted upon it, proclaims "IT'S COMPLICATED." The police with their obedience and batons counter: "*No it's not!*"

So when the law-abiding citizen appeals to the police, to the municipal authorities, to God, he entreats them: *Simplify me! Make the world static and predictable!* But when we fall in love in such a way that it wrecks our lives and drags us into the unknown, we implore our lovers: *Complicate me! Don't save my world—DESTROY IT!*

And so we return to my original question about why we're anarchists, about our *raison d'être*. To use your sound wave metaphor, in contrast to those who would keep the line flat and suppress our complications, as passionists and revolutionaries we set out to extend the curves as far as possible in both directions: joy and suffering, triumph and defeat, the freedom to realize our desires and the TERRIBLE FREEDOM to supercede them.

Creation and destruction, the ecstatic intercourse of revolution.

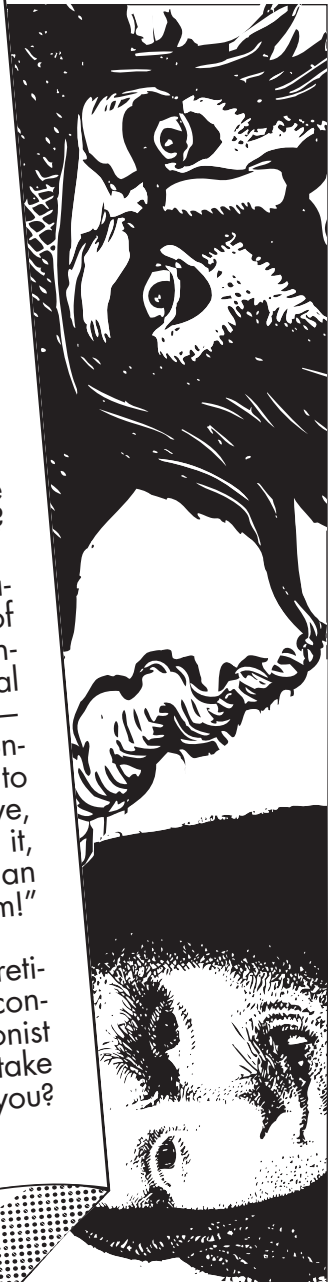


## Blistering Critique:

You're skirting the most important question: are you arguing *for* passionism? Here are the stakes: if you contend that anarchist struggle is vital—and you contend that passionism disposes people to it more than other temperaments do—and you contend that people are largely tempered through oppressive socialization... then it would seem that you're arguing that people (but not you!) should be pursuing desires other than those that are currently consonant for them. How authoritarian! How selfish! Why should a few maniacs who, by their own admission, are *incapable of happiness* get to set the standards according to which everyone else with a conscience has to wreck their lives?

On the other hand, if you're framing temperaments as more or less neutral expressions of "just how we are"—akin to gender, for instance—does that doom you to polite liberal quietism? Or, if not that, then—even worse—*vanguardism*? "These well-tempered non-maniacs will never take the necessary steps to destroy the basis of their complacency—we, the few bold and hopeless enough to go for it, must lead them into the crashing Wagnerian dissonances of passionism!"

At the end, you begin to address this theoretical problem, albeit in an unapologetically contradictory manner. But isn't this just a passionist ploy—if you can't be happy, at least you'll take everyone else down with you?



**DECEMBER, 2011: ONE YEAR  
LATER, "WICCANS" CLAIM  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR  
ATTACK ON ASHEVILLE  
POLICE DEPARTMENT**





“So... I guess it worked.” He let the implications sink in.

“That’s crazy.”

“Yeah, it is.”

“Should we write a communiqué or something?”

“Good question. This is a whole new ball game. I don’t know what the protocol is.”

“It’s tough, because we’re coming from two different traditions. On one hand, we’re anarchists, and our cultural heritage decrees that we have to make anonymous statements claiming our actions—on the other hand, we’re...”

We both paused, trying to figure out what else we were.

“...Wiccans,” he finished for me, shaking his head in dismay. “We’re fucking Wiccans.”

“Oh god, we are.”

We knew about Wiccans from the anti-globalization movement. They were the older folks dressed colorfully near our black blocs; we respected them, but they seemed a little nutty. Why are older anarchists always so weird? And now that we were getting on in years, too, we were taking up their mantle.

There were precedents. In 2004, when a gigantic green dragon puppet erupted into flame outside the building hosting the Republican National Convention, Starhawk had suggested that this was caused by the pagan cluster’s spiral dance. I’d heard rumors she did the same thing when a police officer died of a heart attack while chasing a skateboarder in Philadelphia a little later. Yet to our knowledge, this was the first time in our tenure that anarchists had successfully put a curse on an entire police department.

“What’s the security culture around this? Do we need to post it anonymously? It’s not illegal to cast spells, is it?”


“I don’t think so. We just have to be careful not to leak any technical details, so they can’t remove the curse.”

“Should I leave in the part where we’re hiding in the woods, waiting for that couple to quit their stargazing so we can get our black magic on?”

“Sure, but don’t linger on it. Make it a real communiqué—show them we mean business. And let’s not release it until December—then we can call for solidarity actions on the anniversary.”

So here goes:





*The Anarchist Cabal of Blackest Darkness claims responsibility for the disruption of the Asheville Police Department throughout the year 2011. The APD is responsible for an ongoing campaign of repression against our comrades, including but not limited to the Asheville 11, as well as other rebels and poor people. As every black magician knows, you can't dish it out if they haven't already got it coming.*

*One year ago, at the peak of a total lunar eclipse on the night of the winter solstice, we performed a ceremony invoking the forces of darkness to protect our comrades and turn the ill intentions of the authorities back upon them. Shortly thereafter, the Asheville Police Department was paralyzed by scandal. Police Chief Bill Hogan announced his retirement amid a state investigation into missing guns, drugs, and money from the department's evidence room and criticism from all directions. Nearly a year later the APD remains in disarray; many trials have been indefinitely delayed. May the next blow cancel them altogether!*

*This coming solstice, we urge our comrades to join us in following up on last year's action, raining curses down upon all who further the agenda of the state. They must learn that there are forces in this world more powerful than their repugnant servility. With revolutionary greetings,*

*Cabal of Blackest Darkness -  
Occult Vengeance Cell*



*Here is an example of how you might try this at home. Properly performed, the following spell will provoke for the participants a period of nightmares, failed sexual relationships, hopelessness, anhedonia, and extreme wanderlust. The targets of the spell will be completely unable to prosecute the case.*

To be performed at dusk, or the climax of a lunar eclipse.

Abstinence from sexual activity, alcohol, meat, drugs, and cigarettes for a period of two weeks purifies the mind and body of the practitioner. A more vigorous abstinence such as fasting, silence, solitude, or a night without sleep may supplement such abstinence if the ritual must be performed without the time for fullest purification.

Take a moment for quiet contemplation, perhaps investigating passages from Leviticus, maybe even chapter 20. Orient yourself towards the purpose of this rite: revenge, anger, retribution, violence, disruption, confusion, all to serve for the protection of oneself and one's friends.

Gather all necessary materials in a single box or bag. To begin, say aloud to yourself, "I am mine own god."

Depart from where you have begun. Go out into the world. Follow the signs that draw you. Watch for swirls of leaves, the movement of birds; listen to conversations of strangers; open yourself to the world. This is the devil, showing you hints of which way to go.

Look and listen for the tree that wishes to offer itself to you. Cast a circle around the chosen tree, preferably with a 29-foot rope to mark the boundaries. Light large candles in the cardinal directions and surround yourself with others if you can. Towards the east say, "Jehova." Towards the south say, "Adonai." Towards the west say "Eheieh." Towards the north say, "Agla."

Then say, "I proceed to my work in these mysteries to accomplish that which I desire; therefore, in the names aforesaid, I consecrate this piece of ground for my defense, so that no spirit whatsoever shall be able to break these boundaries, for I say: I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, which is, which was, which shall be, the Almighty; I am the First and the Last; and behold I live for ever and ever; and I have the keys of death and Hell."

Take the hairs you have collected of the individuals involved in the prosecution and wrap them around the nail, and then wrap them in the cloth. If you do not have their hairs, use instead the papers on which you have written the names of these individuals, having been as specific in the naming as possible, and naming each on his own piece. Burn them together, placing them in the censor or sacrificial dish. When all the hair or paper is completely burned, say, "Behold, this is finished."

Hold the nail above your head and speak in a loud voice:

Hail Asmoday, the destroyer!  
Hail Andras, the murderer!  
Hail Flauros, the arsonist!  
Hail Shax, the maimer!  
Hail Satan! Hail Satan! Hail Satan!  
Liberator and prince of darkness.  
Hail Satan!

Fulfill my command, as I call you on this night! My need is great and your powers are strong.

I/we/my friends are engaged in conflict with the regimes of order and obedience: [insert the names of your target(s)]

This nail contains the cursed souls of my enemies,

Those terrible pigs, those abominable fucks, those pieces of shit, those assholes

Groveling bootlickers, bourgeois motherfuckers, murderous tie-wearers, despicable creatures, authoritarian vermin...

See unto it that those I have named do me no further harm, do my friends no further harm, that they fail at their task; that they are blinded; that they are weak; that they make mistakes; that they are fools; that they are disorganized; that they are lazy; that they have no case; that they fail. I declare that for [names of the enemies] I have no love, no care, and give them unto you with no remorse. [They] plan to do and are doing great harm."

Hammer the nail into the tree, so that it is most fully driven in, while saying, repeating

if necessary: "I beseech thee, Asmoday. I beseech thee, Andras. I beseech thee, Flauros. I beseech thee, Shax. I beseech thee, Satan.

"I do require that you aid me and my cause by performing the duties of your office according to the dictates of my words, and in accordance with my will.

"I require that you shall perform that which I have charged you to do all without any interference, harm or destruction to those I love and those I call friend and family.

"Nor shall any beast be subject to any effects from you whatsoever. Further, you shall faithfully and completely fulfill my request given here within 90 days, that I may enjoy the benefits of this charge without trickery, deceit, or guile of any kind.

Hail Asmoday, the destroyer!  
Hail Andras, the murderer!  
Hail Flauros, the arsonist!  
Hail Shax, the maimer!  
Hail Satan! Hail Satan! Hail Satan!  
Liberator and prince of darkness.  
Hail Satan!"

Towards the east say, "Jehova." Towards the south say, "Adonai." Towards the west say "Eheieh." Towards the north say, "Agla."  
Depart.  
May your ventures succeed, comrades.

## Blistering Critique:

The period of "purification" may confuse some who wish to perform this operation in good faith. Equally valid would be a period of ritual desecration, week-long binges of sinful depravity: not bathing, a purposeless crime spree, or bouts of extreme gluttony and sloth. I imagine it speaks to the lifestyle of the authors that abstinence, sobriety, and solitude are seen as methods of escaping vulgar routine and preparing to travel to another world.

While I'm glad to see the Cabal isn't actually encouraging novices toward the evocation of demons, the success of last year's Evocation to Full Physical Apparition, the rite communique<sup>d</sup> above, may rest solely on the intensity of the trance and madness provoked by the visible presence of the spirit and its physical consumption of the poppet delivered unto it. This publicly available spell combines witchcraft, ceremonial magic, and demonolatry in a way that might only be meaningful and entrancing to initiates of the Cabal—beyond "nonfunctional," you might only be encouraging friends and felons to place themselves in extreme danger while achieving piteously little result.



Perhaps no contemporary publication exemplifies the spirit of the Experimentation Committee more thoroughly than **Letters Journal**, surely among the most obscure periodicals currently in print. When the time came to draft contributors for this issue of **Vortex**, the **Letters** staff was at the top of the list. Alfonso 1970s, a time-traveling Italian autonomist from the Years of Lead, volunteered for the task.

After sending a threatening email in poor English ("HERE IS ALFONSO 1970S...") and posting a terrorist music video online with his partner The Thug, Alfonso showed up at the finale of the 2010 **Letters Journal** tour in Bloomington. To the horror of all, he lambasted the audience with his trademark megaphone while The Thug set things on fire, performed lewd gestures, and doused the presenters with water, destroying their notes. Eventually, the editor of **Letters** was coerced into accompanying the two out of the child-care center booked for the event into the backyard, where a golden throne waited atop a litter. As the crowd looked on, the hapless editor was pushed into the chair, raised aloft, and declared king.

At this point, an acquaintance of his happened by with a roll of parchment: "Ah, King Don—I was hoping I'd find you here. I bear an entreaty from your loyal subjects." Alas, there was nothing for it but for poor Don to read the proclamation aloud to the assembled masses, promising that he would produce an artistic work answering the assigned question: "What is the new windows?" The following play, which provoked outrage when he unsuccessfully attempted to have it performed at a panel discussion during a conference in North Carolina, was the result.



*THE  
ANARCHIST  
PANEL  
DISCUSSION*

A PLAY  
IN TWO ACTS



**Primary Setting:** Classroom at small liberal arts college in the American southeast. Chairs are arranged for an audience with a table and chairs at the front for the panelists. The table for the panelists has water bottles or a pitcher with cups. There are various papers and pens arranged on the table. The lighting is “not great” but “not terrible.” The audience is smaller than expected but not “so small the event feels awkward.”

**Secondary Setting:** A house in southern Ohio. Posters on the walls reflecting interest in both popular culture, punk subculture, and anarchism. Stacks of books, records, and zines are spread around the room. There is a television and the complete DVD collection of the **X-Files**. Several cats wander around the room.

## Cast

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CINDY MILSTEIN, PANELIST 1 – A well-educated anarchist who wants anarchism to be “taken seriously” and “popular,” enthusiastic about “popular movements” and “horizontalism,” author of books, comfortable speaking in front of audiences, unsure about other panelists but confident in her approach and ideas

MAXIMILLION, PANELIST 2 – Associated with the “insurrectionist” grouping “Institute for Experimental Freedom,” planning to say “difficult” or “controversial” things that are also “serious,” is both comforted and offended by accusations of incomprehensibility, is both pleased with and uncomfortable about the Institute’s “reputation,” comfortable speaking in front of audiences

DOUG, PANELIST 3 – Connected with anarchist magazines *Modesto Anarcho* and *Vengeance*, plans to be “angry” and “reasonable” and to attack perceived bourgeois and academic “influence” on anarchism, plans to discuss the disconnection of anarchists from “proles,” plans to use hip hop cultural references and to distance himself from other subcultural references,

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plans to make fun of “anarchist subculture,” comfortable speaking in front of audiences

DON, PANELIST 4 – Connected with communist magazine *Letters*, initially turned down invitation to speak on panel because he “isn’t an anarchist and doesn’t care about topic” but was convinced and changed mind due to “wanting to see friends,” “that good vegan restaurant,” and “possibility of doing something interesting,” does not like or understand the ideas of other panelists but maybe likes them “as people,” comfortable speaking in front of audiences

FINN, PANELIST 5 – Connected with “Oakland 100,” an anarchist group in California, plans to talk about “supporting rebellion” and “spreading struggles,” talks with tone of someone who has experienced something “real,” plans to offer “practical proposals” while using “theoretical language,” is angry that others do not “take struggle seriously,” comfortable speaking in front of audiences

HUGH, MODERATOR – Unsure about how to moderate a panel with such disparate panelists, plans to do something “funny” or “provocative” to “stir things up,” anxious that this “something” will fall flat, takes anarchist ideas “seriously” but is “critical of many things,” is anxious of asthma complicating role as moderator, will feel urge throughout panel to leave moderator role and interject “his own ideas,” studied and prepared notes for panel, comfortable speaking in front of audiences

JANE DOE, AUDIENCE MEMBER – Angry at perceived “male dominance” of event, plans to ask pointed

question to one or more of panelists, is torn between thinking “I like Maximillion” and “I do not know what Maximillion is talking about a lot of the time,” feels more comfortable in “wilderness spaces” than “indoor spaces”

JOHN DOE, AUDIENCE MEMBER – Plans to not pay attention to panel but will anyway, angry about perceived “lack of action” in anarchist scene, is an “aggressive” but “sort of thoughtful” sexual partner, frequently comments on [anarchistnews.org](http://anarchistnews.org) when “getting drunk” and “really drunk,” plans to ask a “funny but sort of serious” question that will make audience laugh

LETHA, CALLER – Sitting in room in Ohio, has “urgent message” for the moderator, is nervous about “getting the message to him on time,” “What if I’m wrong about this,” and “What if this means I’m crazy,” thinks “If I do this everything will be OK” and “Everything will not be OK” simultaneously

# *Act One: The Phone Call*

*Act One begins c. 15 minutes before the panel is scheduled to begin. The panelists are pacing around and “getting prepared,” some audience members have begun drifting into the room and talking to each other about what they expect from the panel, some of the panelists and audience members make jokes to “lighten the mood” and “break the ice,” panelists who have never met each other meet and exchange small talk. Panelist 4 hands Moderator a copy of the script with Hugh’s lines highlighted.*

HUGH: (Cell phone rings, answers phone) Hello?

LETHA: (Slightly urgent/distressed voice) Hugh? Hi, this is Letha, in Cincinnati.

HUGH: Hey, how are you?

LETHA: Uh, I’m okay I guess, I’m okay. Can I talk to you about something?

HUGH: Is everything okay? I can’t really talk right now because I’m about to moderate this anarchist panel thing. (Steps away from people around him to talk “privately,” though others in the room can hear what he is saying)

LETHA: I just... well, I... (makes audible nervous sound)... I guess I’ll call back later? (mumbles) It’s all fucked. (stops mumbling) I mean, I just realized I never told you about Don’s... (hangs up)

HUGH: Hello? (Realizes she hung up and stares with neutral face expression, thinks about calling her back, thinks “If it is important, she will call me back,” does not call her back, walks towards other people in room, wonders what she was going to say about Don)

# *Act Two: The Panel*

*Panelists 1-5 sit down at table at the front of the room in a prearranged order. Panelist 4 hands panelists 1, 2, 3, and 5 copies of the script, with each of their respective parts highlighted. Panelists 1-5 read script with confused or bemused or annoyed or anxious looks on their faces. The audience filters into the room.*

PANELIST 2: (to panelist 4) This is sort of funny, but I'm not going to read from your script. (laughs) Did you really expect us to read from it?

PANELIST 3: This is fucking stupid.

PANELIST 4: But you are all playing lead roles! I tried to write your parts fairly and accurately, though obviously I don't know y'all very well. I tried to take all of your "internet presences" and strip away some of the internet bravado. This is my first play.

PANELIST 1: ...

PANELIST 4: Cindy, I watched a video of a talk you gave in Louisville, Kentucky and created your lines from the talk.

PANELIST 1: (chuckling to herself) I really don't know what to say.

PANELIST 5: (flipping through script) I don't get it.

(PANELISTS 1, 2, 3, and 5 look down at the table, then look at PANELIST 4)

(uncomfortable silence)

(The crowd becomes aware of the silence)

PANELIST 4: I mean, I thought it would be an interesting idea if we acted out a scripted panel rather than pretending to be "original" or "inventive." I felt like the potential conflicts or arguments that would arise between us are largely scripted

anyway, so this seemed more honest. I think I'm going to read from my script even if y'all do not, but that's going to come out as stilted or awkward. I really want this to work.

PANELIST 1: (flipping through script) I can't believe you took the time to write all of this.

PANELIST 4: I just want this to work.

MODERATOR: (laughing uncomfortably) Well, the scripts are nice, but I think we should get the panel started. (The panelists sit up a little straighter and the audience becomes nearly silent.) Today's panel is on the topic of "Contemporary Anarchist Struggle." My name is Hugh, and I will be moderating. First I will introduce the panelists, then I will explain the format of the discussion, and finally I will begin posing questions to our panelists. If you have any questions throughout the panel this afternoon, please write them on a notecard and pass them to me. (an unnamed person stage left begins handing out notecards)

MODERATOR: Okay, our first panelist is Cindy Milstein. Cindy recently published the book *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* and is a member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies.

PANELIST 1: Hello.

MODERATOR: Our second panelist is Maximillion, who joins us from the Institute of Experimental Freedom.

PANELIST 2: (gestures with one hand)

MODERATOR: The third panelist, Doug, joins us from California, where he is involved with the publications *Vengeance* and *Modesto Anarcho*.

PANELIST 3: Yo.

MODERATOR: Our fourth panelist today is Don, who edits *Letters Journal*.

PANELIST 4: (scratches head) Hi.

MODERATOR: Our final panelist is another Californian. Finn is part of the Oakland 100 group, who do work to support those arrested during the Oscar Grant rebellion.

PANELIST 5: Hey.

PANELIST 2: (interjecting, lifting script above his head with one hand while speaking) Sorry Don, but I'm not going to read from this script!

MODERATOR: OK, OK. Don wrote out a full script for the panel today (holds script in air for audience to see), which is pretty crazy, but we're going to go ahead and do this panel without it.

PANELIST 4: (interjecting) I'm still going to read from the script. Oh, and here are copies for the audience, so, uh, they can read along and not be left out. Actually, I wrote the audience into the play.

(Audience laughs "sort of uncomfortably" and thinks "this is funny" and "this is weird and uncomfortable." They begin passing the scripts out amongst themselves and reading through them; the sound of the script paper rustling and people commenting interrupts the moderator's introduction.)

JANE DOE: (to the person next to her) This is fucking hilarious.

MODERATOR: (coughing to regain the audience's attention) Well, Don is going to read from his script, but the rest of us are going to go on without reading it. As I said earlier, the topic of the panel today is "Contemporary Anarchist Struggle." I will be reading questions to the panelists, who will each have five minutes to respond, followed by three minutes for each to respond to the others. We will be strict about time limits. And like I said earlier, if you are in the audience and have a question, please write it down on a notecard and pass it to me.

PANELIST 1: May panelists submit additional questions as well?

MODERATOR: (pausing) Hmmm, we hadn't thought about that, but sure. Panelists can pose questions during their time speaking, or they may write questions down on notecards. (pausing again, shuffling papers) Our first question is this: What is the anarchist project and how does it differ from

the social democratic project, or other revolutionary projects? Panelists will each have five minutes for their opening remarks. We will begin with Cindy Milstein. Cindy, you have five minutes.

PANELIST 1: Thank you Hugh, and thank you to everyone who came today. This conference is awesome, and the organizers have done a really good job pulling it all together. (looks down at paper, pauses) Wait, you didn't write a monologue for me? I thought you were going to transcribe a video of me giving a presentation in Louisville. You did a horrible job writing my character.

PANELIST 5: Don, why are you even here?

PANELIST 4: I'm sorry Cindy. I'm sorry Finn. I guess I'm here because Khalil told me to come here. I don't really know what to say. I have a lot of excuses. I'm sorry.

PANELIST 1: It's typical of writers, especially men, to cast themselves as the lead in their own play. Can I continue? We're here to talk about anarchism, not talk about you.

PANELIST 4: Yes, I'm so sorry. Please continue.

PANELIST 1: But you didn't write a monologue for me. How can I continue?

PANELIST 4: I thought you weren't reading from the script.

PANELIST 3: This is fucking stupid.

MODERATOR: (laughing loudly)

PANELIST 4: (puts head down on table)

PANELIST 3: How can working class people take anarchism seriously when it's nothing but bourgeois liberals and artists with nothing to say about real struggles going on? Can you imagine taking a coworker to this conference?

PANELIST 1: It's still my time to speak.



PANELISTS 2, 3, 5: Then speak!

PANELIST 1: So the subject of the anarchist project... well, without a written monologue I will talk from my notes. (looks down at papers) The subject of the anarchist project are the working men and women, the students, and all oppressed people. The subject of the anarchist project are those who struggle for a free and equal society. Anarchists have done a poor job of communicating their ideas and goals to those people who are fed up with the system, and the far right have taken a lot of that energy and disapproval and channeled it towards their own ends. We need to work harder at communicating clearly and participating in social movements that do exist. We can't sit back in the shadows because our time is now.

MODERATOR: (looking down at watch/phone) Well, your time is up.

PANELIST 1: My time can't possibly be up. When did you start timing? Because I was interrupted. The time spent talking about the play script can't possible count against me.

MODERATOR: I never stopped the time.

PANELIST 1: I was going to talk about building anarchist momentum by participating in popular social movements.

MODERATOR: Maybe you can talk about that later.

PANELIST 1: ...

PANELIST 4: (picking head up off table) Cindy,



I'm so unfamiliar with your work I had trouble writing your part. That's one of the reasons your monologue gets cut off. I want you to be represented fairly, but I don't know if I can do that. I don't know if I can represent any of you fairly, maybe not even myself. Maybe being fair is the wrong thing to try to do. I had never written a script before.

PANELIST 1: I'm starting to wish I was unfamiliar with your work!

PANELIST 4: Okay. I cede my time to you Cindy, since I'm not an anarchist and don't really have a position on the subject of this panel.

PANELIST 1: I don't want your time.

PANELIST 4: OK.

PANELIST 5: Whoever invited this guy made a terrible decision. Are we going to spend this whole panel talking about his stupid play script or can we talk about the subject at hand? For some of us this isn't idle abstraction, it's a life and death struggle in our neighborhoods and communities. Cops are killing and locking people up. There is real anger, and rather than sit back and criticize each other, we need to get our feet on the ground and get our hands dirty.

PANELIST 2: "There are no means of excluding practices of normality either the civil war of gendered society or the social peace of banal sexual techniques of power and their accompanying anxieties." Wait, did you really give me that line? Did you just write me as a caricature?

PANELIST 4: Yes, mostly I took lines from IEF pamphlets. Everything you say is more or less unrelated to what other people are saying.

PANELIST 2: I guess that's what happens when you enter into the logic of civil war and get organized.

MODERATOR: (laughing) Can we continue the panel?

PANELIST 3: No. This panel has fallen apart. Middle class degenerates!

AUDIENCE: (together and loudly) CONTINUE THE PANEL!

PANELIST 1: Let's try to continue.

PANELIST 4: We can try, but I'm afraid I did not write anything more of substance.

MODERATOR: Okay, okay, we don't have to read from the script. Panelist 2, Maximillion, what is your response to the initial question?

PANELIST 2: The Anarchist Man is of the same apparatus that links the Anarchist Queer, the Anarcha-Feminist-Woman, and The Anarchist POC. This apparatus can be best described as what remains of antagonistic subjectivities and strategic essentialism. I call this apparatus identity politics, but we could also think of it as the preconditions for the formation of the imaginary postfeminist dictatorship, which is the logical advancement of an insurrectional feminism. Identity politics is clearly a limited strategy. The safe spaces that were the basis of strategic essentialism have all collapsed. The subject of the anarchist project is now danger itself. Danger is the glue that binds antagonistic social bodies. Danger is the blood in the heart of the moose standing in the road, prepared to give her life to kill a motorist. Danger is the separation between the-body-as-life and the-body-as-citizen that we plunge into when we begin the insurrectional project. When CrimethInc. says "live dangerously," they are halfway right. To live is to be dangerous, to inhabit the space of danger and to contaminate that space with our diseased and dying bodies. We cannot cut ties with the milieu—we are too enthralled with the pretty faces and gestures—but we can insist on placing Danger front and center, on creating dangerous spaces rather than pretending our spaces are safe. Danger is the subject of the anarchist subject. We submit to it and take pleasure in its cruelty. I will give up the rest of my time.

MODERATOR: Let's keep this moving along, shall we? Doug will speak now.

PANELIST 3: Hey, I'm Doug from *Modesto Anarcho* and *Vengeance*. I'm not here to talk a bunch of academic bullshit or play games or whatever. Proles are the subject of the anarchist project. Working class struggle is everything. That's my answer, straight up. Middle class activism and art and subculture get in the way of anarchism being a space for pissed off proles to get organized together to steal and break shit. Nobody wants to read theory journals that tell them to wait. Nobody wants to read academic nonsense, even if it looks hot or whatever. How many of the people in this room have trust funds? How many

of the people in this room are going to college on their parents' dime? How many people in this room grew up in big houses? How many people in this room grew up in families who paid someone to clean that big house? Well, the anarchist subject was the person cleaning your house and looking at the anarchist posters on your wall. The anarchist subject was the guy mowing your lawn or the lady changing your oil or waiting your table. And the thing is, none of those people are anarchists because they don't care about your subculture or what European professor you're reading: they want food and money and cars and guns, and they want to destroy all the middle class motherfuckers they have to spend their lives waiting on and being patronized by. The anarchist subject would rip the anarchist scene apart. That's all I got for now.



JOHN DOE: (to person next to him) Finally someone said that shit!

MODERATOR: Remember, panelists, you have five minutes to make your opening statements. Nobody, except Cindy Milstein, has used all of their time. Next up is Don from *Letters Journal*.

PANELIST 4: Hi, so uh, I want to talk about something else. I want to talk about a question: what is the new windows? What is the new windows? That question is sort of unclear, so let's break it apart. Right now windows are the things anarchists break, right? So, the new windows is the new thing for anarchists to break. But there is more. Windows are also the border between the inside and the outside, the space where one views the outside but does not enter it. This border is not a separation but a space where the inside and outside penetrate and contaminate each other. So, what is the new windows? What is that penetrating space that must be broken? I don't know how to answer that question directly, so I'm going to work around it and maybe get closer to it in a roundabout way. I think anarchism is primarily the struggle for a generalized state, for a diffuse and historical state that covers the entire social terrain, a total democracy. The two main anarchist proposals—represented here by Maximillion and Cindy, with Doug as a sort of middle ground between the two—are two different visions of democracy. On the one hand, we have the riot, which is a pure and unmediated democratic gesture. In many places in the world, candidates are elected with the riot, rather than the ballot. Social war is, in reality, civil war, as Maximillion says, but in making the social/civil war connection, they do not acknowledge the fundamentally democratic nature of that proposition. The horizontal, free society envisioned by Milstein lacks the pure democracy of the riot and puts in its place a series of democratic mediations: the assembly, the council, and so on. Competing democratic visions. But what is the new windows? What is the penetrating space that must be broken? I want to say language. I want to say communication. Both of those are, in a direct way, spaces of penetration between the inside and the outside, but how would one break them? And why? Maybe the form of this panel, its scriptedness, its incompleteness, the flatness of the characters, the impossibility of representing something “real” point towards half of that answer. To those of you seeking guidance from a king, your answer is there. This is part of the experiment.

MODERATOR: Ok. Finally, we have Finn from the Oakland 100.



PANELIST 5: The script doesn't have a monologue for me either.

PANELIST 4: Sorry, I looked at your group's website but couldn't figure out what you would say on this panel.

PANELIST 5: I wasn't talking to you. I don't know. I will present something from my notes, rather than read the script. Who is the subject of the anarchist project? Anarchists are the subject. This is not to say that anarchists are the revolutionary subject, but that the anarchist project and the revolutionary project are carried out on two different levels of human organization. To borrow Hegelian language, revolution occurs or does not occur on the world-historical level of organization, but the anarchist project does not and cannot occur on that level. Our struggles occur on an individual or human level. It is unclear how this relates to the higher level of revolution. We have to begin where we are and accept ourselves as the primary actors in our collective drama. In Oakland, this meant putting aside the question of "who belongs in the riot," which has been posed again and again by Leftists and social managers, and finally realizing that we belong to ourselves and for ourselves. If we seek out others—for example, those who were arrested with us in the streets—we do so on our own terms and nobody else's. As long as anarchists continue to play second fiddle to larger social bodies—whether "popular social movements" or even "the local community"—we will fail to create our own trajectory of struggle and impose ourselves on the world. If one accepts the painful and difficult responsibility of carrying out one's own struggle and not relying on others, the real possibility of affinity and solidarity emerges. And if we lose—because we might lose, we will probably lose—it won't matter because the fight was ours the whole time. We will die on a battlefield of our own choosing. We are the subjects. We cannot accept any less than that.

MODERATOR: Those are the initial statements from each participant. Remember if you have a question, please send it to the front on a notecard. We will now begin the response segment. Each panelist has 3 minutes to respond to what the others have said.

(lights fade)

## *End Scene*







## **Blistering Critique:**

One sometimes suspects that Don intentionally sabotages his efforts to interact with the rest of the species so there can be no danger they will fail on their own merits.

**T**he following essay was never meant to be read again, let alone put into print. That it appears here is an attempt to assault the dignity and intentions of the author.

It poses the question of friendship without even really beginning to answer it, relying on a handful of authors with a merely passing interest in friendship—even Derrida’s “Politics of Friendship” is really just about democracy. Reading books, friendship is elsewhere. After three hours of talking, we might arrive at a stronger sense of friendship, but it’s not the lecture *per se* that delivers us there.

The text that follows is compiled from an incomplete series of lectures delivered primarily to non-academic audiences, one at a private event and one as part of an anarchist convergence. It was an experiment in a different way of doing lectures. It makes several successive voices contemporaneous: the process of thinking about the subject, of writing about it, of speaking about it, of your reading which is about to commence. The resulting failure has only provided hours upon hours of continued adjustments, new hypotheses, and further attempts to arrive in a position for which we are sorely unprepared.

**ALL THE  
TERRIBLE  
THINGS WE  
DO TO EACH  
OTHER**





**T**

*his is a lecture*, workshop, and discussion on anarchy and friendship.

I am not a philosopher. Sure, this lecture is a part of a project that I'm going to use in a likely futile attempt to get into grad school [ed. note: did not apply to grad school], but really, the reason I'm here is to see what happens. It's 10 am this morning and I'm just now finally collecting all of my notes from a month—a rather intense month—which I have spent attempting to reconsider and experiment with friendship. Most often this has meant putting the reading and writing of this work aside for whatever idle conversation or meager adventure a friend has offered. So, what follows will not be edited nor philosophically thorough. It is the result of, I hope, lived friendship, and if I draw from experiences more than the texts in front of me, I hope none of you will hold this as a weakness.

Also, it would be a mistake to consider this lecture a proposal of any sort, or advancing a thesis. Mostly it's an attempt to capture thoughts and put them together in a way to see if they make sense to anyone else. It's certainly not a complete piece and the goal is more to spur a different sort of conversation and open up different directions for thinking anarchist thoughts.

Also—friends, don't record this.

Something about this talk feels dangerous or stupid. So I'm going to do it.

## I. THE QUESTION OF FRIENDSHIP

*What is so pleasant as these jets of affection which make a young world for me again? What so delicious as a just and firm encounter of two, in a thought, in a feeling? How beautiful, on their approach to this beating heart, the steps and forms of the gifted and the true! The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is metaphorphosed; there is no winter and no night; all tragedies, all ennuis, vanish—all duties even, nothing fills the proceeding eternity but the forms all radiant of beloved persons. Let the soul be assured that somewhere in the universe it should rejoin its friend, and it would be content and cheerful alone for a thousand years.*

—Emerson, "Friendship"

SO, HELLO FRIENDS.

Already a problem here, friends. All the earliest philosophers noted that philosophical matters are best discussed among friends. So then apparently we have a problem before we even begin—are we in the proper setting to even be having this discussion at all? If philosophy should be discussed among friends, one would think this lecture format inappropriate for communicating anything worthwhile. We should perhaps be sipping wine and smoking cigarettes and letting our minds wander from topic to topic. We should be wandering the town committing indiscretions and contemplating the implications of our actions. After all, don't lovers ponder love while lying next to one another in bed, where they are able to make the most of their discoveries and follow them through to their logical conclusions?

I think it would be fair to say pieces of this lecture are a sort of taking up of the *Letters Journal* challenge to break language like a window. If you listen closely, perhaps you'll catch it. If you've taken a philosophy course, maybe it will be pretty clear. A lot of this is free and automatic writing, so you'd be able to destroy what I say if we were allowed a period of contemplation. But we're not allowing that, right, you're only hearing the words, not reading along with anything, and we're not going to revisit anything I say. What I want to try is: Oh, here's a trash can, will this work? What about PVC pipes? Or bricks? Hammers? And even if any of these work, we're not trying to

break the window that is the end of windows. It's a practice, a practice of breaking language, over and over, continually, giving it force and meaning and weaving these practices together with others, also breaking language or writing poetry or writing windows.

Who are you? How do i call you friends? What does this mean? And more importantly, if this next hour we spend together is to have any meaning, how shall we put our discovery to use?

I'm intentionally reading this word for word, and I hope besides the content you'll appreciate something from the format itself. It's not so often we allow one of us to just write and talk and talk. I'm listening to Cindy Milstein right now—I wonder if she's in the room now—but listening to her talk is actually dizzying. Besides the content, she's talking so fast, so fast, my head is spinning. I can't concentrate. I can't even focus on what she's saying unless I try thinking along really really fast, so fast I am not even processing what is being said. I don't even know if I agree; or, I wouldn't, if it were simply this lecture I were being judgmental about. I'll do my best to speak slowly and clearly; stop me if you don't understand a word or just want to test and see if I'm using a word without knowing what it means. I don't want an experience of an experience, words flying past manipulating our emotions. I want an experience of language, I want your head spinning because you've made it spin, perhaps from some single sentence that resonates with you or some idea I'm trying out that you are able to figure out.

Given also that this is supposed to be a lecture of *anarchy* and friendship, perhaps it would be first prudent to elaborate that concept. For us, anarchy shall mean the state of affairs, or the attempts at moving toward such, that wholly rejects capitalism—that is to say, any form of quantitative logic, productive relations based on calculated reciprocity, economic relations mediated by money, and access to resources granted by social privileges—and the state—any system of horrible violence which coerces obedience and exacts punishment for misdeeds.

If some of you wish to make political use of the thought in this lecture, then we should begin here: before we claim to wish to build a politics based on a particular word: communism, anarchism, friendship, we need to understand what is meant by the use of the word. If up until now we have been able to function together in spite of our different uses of the words we hold in common, then perhaps all is well; but perhaps also we will find a day

when our irreconcilable definitions make us wholly unable to communicate any longer. This is really just another way of saying we need to first “define our terms.” For communism or anarchism or liberation, OK, that seems easy enough. But friendship? What could we even mean by a politics of friendship? Friendship has a billion histories and as many meanings. The intensity with which we use the words needs to be matched by an intensity of thinking in common.

At first glance, and perhaps because I have already a position on the issue and so have framed it as such, one feels a particular affinity between the two concepts. After all, as I’ve described it, what is friendship but the anarchy of the relation between two loving bodies? And what is anarchy but a global system of friendship? But this would really be an over-simplification, of both terms. Anarchy, or anarchism, after all, is not merely some noble ideal, but a particular constellation of projects and rebellions over the past two centuries aimed at overthrowing the ruling social order. It is a history of peasants ransacking town halls and government buildings, of conspiracies assassinating dozens of heads of state and capitalist magnates. Sometimes it fails, it fails at itself in its very being itself. It is the calculated project of shooting landowners and collectivizing land in Spain in 1936, of strikes and demands and riots across the United States, and a thousand other insurrections with and without flags aimed at wrecking the landscape to find out what happens when we attempt live without these practices of calculation and obedience which have dominated our forms of life for centuries and millennia.

Anarchy is not the mere extension of the offer of friendship to anyone (some fascists on the wrong side of a Heil Hitler salute could tell you that!). And there’s something to our notions of friendship that suggests a universal friendship would not necessarily lead to the kind of world we are interested in. There’s something peculiar about that idea. Friendship has its own history; it has billions of histories, and the rich and powerful monsters have friends no less than we.

Yet somehow here we are: anarchy, friendship. This lecture is less a proposal than an attempt to bridge the gaps in our thinking, a first movement in a direction, toward what really I don’t know. Let’s keep that in mind.

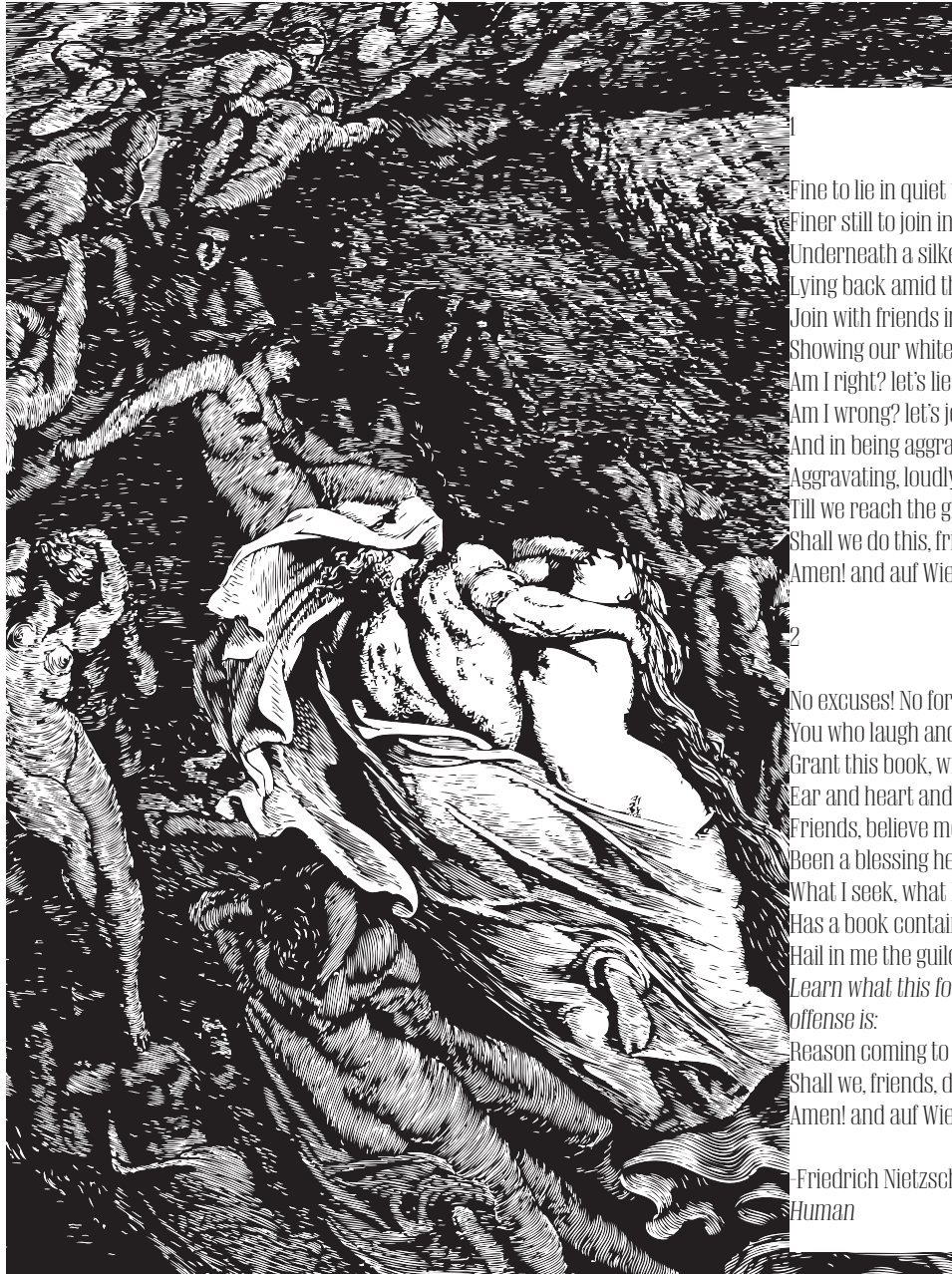
—I just took a break from writing this and had a thought, which I’ll insert here and then see where it goes. When I said friendship before, when I say friendship, perhaps we are thinking of different things. After all, if friendship for each of us has its own history it obviously has its own meaning; we each use the word in different ways with different understandings.



We might suddenly find ourselves on different planets, speaking different languages, alienated, isolated, and alone. The exact same touches, words, and gestures suddenly convey such different meanings.

Doing philosophy is a way of putting our ideas together, gathering together from wherever we are, starting again from there so we can have this discussion. Maybe your understanding of friendship is one that, if applied universally, would or could somehow result in anarchy or the chaotic world we want. So, when I say friendship as a thing we have yet to figure out, you are confused. Friends, to you, perhaps, are obvious, more obvious than any political movement or ideology. We would disagree here, and our conversation would get sidetracked as your thoughts took you in the direction that I must be a fool, or megalomaniac or solipsist or sociopath, to say we have no idea what it is to be a friend, who is a friend, that I do not know whether or not you and I are friends.

So then, to begin to unsettle your understanding of friendship, I must begin again, from a different position. After all, this is supposed to be a philosophical lecture—and to be honest, when I'm not trying very hard to understand what a "friend" is in *doing*, I spend most of my time away from friends reading books. Let's look at what Aristotle said of friendship, if only to use that as a starting point to get us on the same page. And then we can go from there, and we will try to figure out if when we use "friend" we are saying the same thing, if we even know what we are saying.



1  
Fine to lie in quiet together  
Finer still to join in laughing—  
Underneath a silken heaven  
Lying back amid the grasses  
Join with friends in cheerful laughing,  
Showing our white teeth together.  
Am I right? let's lie in the quiet;  
Am I wrong? let's join in laughing  
And in being aggravating,  
Aggravating, loudly laughing,  
Till we reach the grave together.  
Shall we do this, friends, again?  
Amen! and auf Wiedersehen!

2  
No excuses! No forgiving!  
You who laugh and joy in living  
Grant this book, with all its follies,  
Ear and heart and open door!  
Friends, believe me, all my folly's  
Been a blessing heretofore!  
What I seek, what I discover—  
Has a book contained it ever?  
Hail in me the guild of fools!  
*Learn what this fools-book's  
offense is:*  
Reason coming to its senses!  
Shall we, friends, do this again?  
Amen! and auf Wiedersehen!

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*

## II. THREE TYPES OF FRIENDSHIP

“O MY FRIENDS, THERE IS NO FRIEND!”

A quote from Aristotle, coming to me by Derrida in citing Nietzsche citing Montaigne in what is perhaps a mistranslation of Aristotle that, nonetheless, provoked and courses through Derrida’s book *Politics of Friendship*, the book that is largely responsible for my rambling up here today. Such mistranslation and misquoting will perhaps form the backbone of what follows in my attempt to do philosophy, so bear with me.

How could Aristotle, who writes two chapters on friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, declare there are no friends? If there is no friend, then how could I call you “my friends,” my friends? If I call you “my friends,” how dare I add that there is no friend?

Friendship, then. What’s most important for our purposes is not this misquote—this “supposed” misquote—but really Aristotle’s take on three forms of friendship. So, while you and I may have what we think is a pretty good understanding of friendship, Aristotle breaks it down into three categories of friendship. There are friendships of Pleasure—this is essentially the idea of Lovers—friendships of Utility—we have here political and economic friendship—and then friendships of Virtue—the exemplary friendship, the best friendships, the friendship based in Aristotle’s ideas of Virtue and the Good. It’s actually fairly difficult to use Aristotle’s forms to get us anywhere meaningful, not the least because we do of course reject his ideas of Virtue and the Good. But we can come to that bridge when we cross it.

First, we have the friendships of pleasure and utility. Aristotle criticizes these because these are both rather selfish forms of friendship. That is, friendships of utility dissolve as soon as they cease to be to the friends’ advantage. Likewise, friendships of pleasure collapse as soon as the object of pleasure no longer gives the expected form of pleasure. The friendships of these forms are not based in the virtue of the other but in what we take from them, what they do for us. What’s most contradictory here is that these forms of friendship, most prone to collapse, are built on the promise of their own stability.

Let’s take the utilitarian friendship, since this is what Aristotle calls the political friendship and since our lecture is supposed to be on anarchy—which, while it isn’t really, or at least it shouldn’t be, a political concept, we find many people treating it as such. The promise of certain political friendship is that one party is useful for the other, both parties find use in one another, and so an alliance is formed. Perhaps in the anarchist camp we find this as two bodies identifying one another as having this extremist ideology and then also doing something that appears to be a way of putting this ideology into practice—say, a variety of community projects or organizing efforts,

or maybe it's just the desire to riot and therefore making use of one another as objects of riot. The friends involved see the utility in one another and make use of it. This isn't a condemnation of the friendship of utility—I'm merely pointing out what specifically is going on. But friendship based on this principle is easily subject to collapse: when I get burned out, injured, tired, arrested, suddenly I am no longer able to be put to use by my friend.

I think the trick here, really a good move on Aristotle's part, is in his pointing out that the utilitarian friendship isn't just political, which is the aspect Derrida tends to focus on, but also economic. The idea of "economic friendship" is a bit of a stretch for some of us, but let's just hold the thought. We can imagine how two businessmen might engage in business—say, the trade of books or something—and in the course of business they consider one another friends. They act as friends might: they chat, give each other things, go out to eat. More importantly, they have a trust with one another that is very near the essence of friendship.

But it is a particular trust, based on a particular development of their friendship. The book buyer never expects his friend to give him books, and the seller never expects more than the fair price. Their friendship is based on this calculated equality. It's not difficult to imagine that the friendship as utilitarian friendship would quickly wither if the one's printing press or the other's bookshop closed down. As friends of utility, neither of them imagine differently. But they have between them a mutual understanding of the terms of their friendship. A friendship formed on fixed conditions is a "legal friendship." This is perhaps one way of overcoming the arbitrary collapse of friendship, but the threat lingers.

So, here we have a central point of contention with our understanding of anarchy and friendship: it seems that, for Aristotle at least and likely within our Western political notions of friendship, a calculated equality is a way to maintain our friendship.

Friends of pleasure likely lack this strictly economic understanding of one another, but we see how that makes the threat of collapse that much more present. Our passionate friendships burn much brighter than our utilitarian ones. The businessmen have a clear understanding of what is and is not a part of their friendship, and this is perhaps one way of overcoming the arbitrary collapse of friendship. But we want no serious contracts in our friendships, right?

—Friends, again I get distracted from my writing. Meta. The offer of a cigarette from a friend. Pleasure. Utility. I'm jumping ahead here, but maybe this will be a good spot, so I can get ahead of myself and get back on track to get where I really want to go, the good part, the crazy part in all this.

Aristotle's third form of friendship, true friends, good friends, friends of

virtue, the friends I have here around me at the moment. Well, no, we're certainly not friends of virtue (some of you can perhaps guess who is around me at the moment). But the highest form of friendship, which, obviously, I must think I share with those around me now—Aristotle would note these friendships too are comprised of utility and pleasure. But the character of virtue, the virtue of the other, is also some magic glue that holds friendships together. We obviously want to discard this idea of virtue, at least as Aristotle regards it, as something toward which to strive and which holds us together. Let all virtues collapse that our friendship may continue. But let's consider virtue as a sort of empty placeholder for the *whatever* that holds us together as friends. We are each thinking of something different here, and probably different for each of our different true friendships, but that is the point, I think. We'll get to that.

What is really important, that I'm giving short order here, is that the true friendship, like the one offering me this cigarette, gives me both pleasure and utility, but it is not reducible to these. It is something else, something whatever.

What this form really offers for us is the suggestion of a friendship grounded in a whatever outside the selfishness of either party, a type of friendship based on the adherence to a set of values or external conditions—we would say, a set of practices—which bind us together. This is the ideal friendship, probably the friendship of which most of us speak when we say we want a politics based on friendship. It is the friendship in which we would say “something in my soul recognizes something in your soul,” a pure friendship. This is not to say it excludes qualities from the other two forms of friendship—this friendship is both pleasurable and utilitarian, but it is not reducible to these acts; pleasure and utility spring forth from a well of virtue—or *whatever*.

—I was speaking of my lovers. Not only is our relationship to a certain degree unspoken, unless it is the peculiar situation in which we arrange a contract as master and slave or husband and wife, but the pleasure we receive is not mutual. As the lover, I receive pleasure from my desired object; as beloved, from the acts he bestows upon me. For the lover the pleasure is in the mere presence of the desired object, for the beloved it is my own being-loved that I love. The gap between us is unbridgeable. It is, to whatever extent, an unequal relationship, or—an incalculable unequal equality. It would be absurd for the lover to expect any act of reciprocity in the types of love he bestows on the beloved. The lover loves to love. The sources of pleasure, inasmuch as they are different, confine us to a certain understanding of what it is to be equal and, inasmuch as we accept the roles and terms to which we are confined, we find happiness and love and bliss in this friendship, ever also on the verge of collapse.



So then: friendship,  
the three types of friendship.  
Pleasure, utility, and, the one  
we have largely neglected  
with perhaps good reason,  
virtue.

[Quote from *The Politics of  
Friendship*, page 53]

### III. VIRTUE AND FORM OF LIFE

WHY, THEN, THIS NEGLECT OF VIRTUE? Well, to be honest, because I haven't read Aristotle's chapters on virtue and so making it the emphasis of this essay as a description of how we should do friendships is really beyond me. Nevertheless, my loose understanding of what is meant by virtue and Aristotle's treatment of virtuous friendship in the Friendship chapters reveal it as something we must reject if we are to achieve the chaos of love and friendship we so madly desire.

To begin again—why friendship and politics? For Aristotle, “the properly political act comes down to creating the most possible friendship.” This is a bit clarified, perhaps, when we utilize Nazi philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt's concept of the political—that the “political” is the act of declaring friends and enemies. His desire, in a nutshell, in understanding this concept, is the suppression of the political within a political order—the suppression of difference and conflict within a society. By defusing the intensity within society with which people made themselves—that is, how they declared friends and enemies—the State would reduce all bodies to mere citizens, lacking the intensities of love and enmity that created discord. In this reduced position, as *hostis* [Latin for “enemy”], citizen bodies unknown to one another would find their only friends in the State, which would also then define their enemies and have total control over their form of life.

A bit of a bastardized paraphrasing, for sure. Continue to run with me.

For Aristotle, the *telos* or end-goal of the State is the Good Life. The ideal State is one that allows its citizens to dwell in virtue. And so here we have it again, that damn virtue. We can excuse Aristotle for not having seen the horrors that follow in the wake of all those grand projects of virtue, and certainly I need not list them for you. But this really is the crux of the problem, the problem of government and collectivities generally but also this problem of friendship, which we still haven't pinned down. We won't blame Aristotle for not being a nihilist, but really—this is a man who believes in good and evil, and metaphysics. I doubt he'd even heard of historical materialism. His attempts at defining and discovering virtue are virtuous, but what it reveals is something else—that which Aristotle defines as virtue is virtuous for a particular form of life. Certainly we don't expect wives to obey husbands or peasants to obey kings, so we can no longer call these things virtuous. So this is why we discarded the notion of virtue and used it as kind of a placeholder. That is, we can reject Aristotle's universal virtue for the idea that virtue, the object of the good life, is simply whatever is the object of a particular form of life.

I'm trying to use philosophy here to cross a few borders and get from Aristotle's descriptions of "friendship" to Agamben's prescription for the *whatever singularity*. Hang tight.

Agamben uses the term form-of-life (with hyphens) as a way to say "the good life," a life that cannot be separated from its form, in which the restriction of the possibilities of life is simply impossible. What is "good life," what is good for each form-of-life is simply happiness, however that form-of-life might define it.

He takes the term from a linguistic philosopher, Wittgenstein, who used the term in a radically different way. For Wittgenstein, form of life is simply a shorthand way of saying all of the environmental, historical, sociological factors that create the conditions for us to understand the words we use, how we understand and use language. When two bodies understand one another, they share a form of life. This is because words, in Wittgenstein's convincing characterization of language, only have meaning in shared use. So, for the word in our examples, "good," good isn't a word that has a meaning in itself. We learn "good" in activity, in our relations with one another. We can say "good" is the product of our form of life. Our understanding of good is a part of our form of life.

Because Aristotle speaks of virtue, and we do not have virtue, only *whatever*, we will say that what Aristotle calls virtue is a common inclination toward a particular form of life; the whatever that holds us together as friends is a certain unspeakable fact of our living in common without justice. Justice, Aristotle's justice, is excluded even from his virtuous friendship. Why is this the case? Because we do not treat friends justly, we treat them as friends—friends, as we together understand the word, because we share a form of life. Friends do not share some-thing (virtue or justice, for instance), they are shared by the experience of friendship.

—I'm on page five of my speech; I don't know how far this is in the lecture itself. Maybe you're getting bored at this point. I hope not, because really this is where it gets even more boring. No one really understands this Agamben shit, and no one knows where he's going with it, except maybe our old friend and he just thinks it means the T-word. I'm going to try to salvage something from that understanding.

I guess a part of where I'm trying to go with this Wittgenstein-Agamben connection, at the moment so far removed from friendship, is that what is good is dependent on our form of life, it is dependent upon how we *always already* act in the world. If we understand something when it is communicated it is by always already having experienced it. And so when I say friend and we hear different things, it is because while we share some activity in common we inhabit different forms of life.



And if when I say friend it means a certain willingness to throw everything away for a person you've just met or if you seek out certain intensities because you believe that is the purpose of friendship, to have grand and wild experiences, then perhaps we share a certain form of life—a certain idea of the good life, a common understanding of the word happiness.

To share a form of life is to share potentialities, to inhabit a something that is possible in the future. It is not to be static, to be identified, but to be living in common.

Aha! But here we have again Aristotle's friendship. That mistranslation from the beginning: "O my friends, there is no friend!" What if perhaps the translation was supposed to go something like, "He who has many friends, has not a single friend"? This is really then the question of numbers. When I call "Friends," how many of us are there?

Aristotle doesn't give us a clear number, but he makes it certain that we understand that true friendship is only possible with a limited number. So then here suddenly we see, if we didn't already, that really we can't just make anarchy in the world by becoming friends with everyone. That's silly. Our friendships would be meaningless. We all probably already knew this. Any of us who've had friends, or bodies around us we called friend, we know that friendship requires both time and a degree of living together.

There are just too many people for us to be friends with everyone. The more people we try to be friends with, the less time we have to develop each of our friendships. More importantly, though, friendship requires a degree of living together. We can understand this as the ability to develop collective experiences and understandings of the world around our friendship. Living together is a sort of putting our futures together: you have to admit that to some extent, even if we're not getting married, our futures are now intertwined. So, in some sense we've developed together a common goal, even if that goal is the friendship itself—which is to say, now, our form of life—and we can see that our form of life is the possibilities we share AND the good life we create.

—I take a break again. A— is outside with the dog, and I'm trying to write, though it's a bit too bright and I'm distracted by text messages and awkwardness and at this point I feel like I'm running out of steam even though I haven't even gotten where I really want. But at this point here we are, thinking friendship together; whatever we're thinking about, we're calling it friendship. Even though we may inhabit different forms of life. But we see here Aristotle trying to figure out numbers, the numbers game.

Form of life for Wittgenstein isn't a technical term, there's not a number attached to it either, and really philosophers aren't clear if he suggests there's just one human form of life, or if form of life is something akin to culture or subculture or nation—though of course we must heartily reject the idea that form of life is anything

with a distinct boundary. Form of life is both the experience of our past and the possibility we share of the future. Yet we inhabit form of life in the present: it is what we are when we speak.

Oh shit, I've just introduced the concept of time. And if I start saying "was," "is," and "will be" all of a sudden I'm going to be talking Heidegger and Being and grammar and shit. Not going there.

Friends \_\_\_\_\_ Friends make the world turn 'round You share secrets, lockers, money, hopes & dreams \_\_\_\_\_ Friends need you \_\_\_\_\_ You need friends A friend can make the day go by, as fast as lightning all the giggles have to end \_\_\_\_\_ Or a fight with a friend can make you misrrible as you count the minutes ticking by [sic] 1,2,3,4 it seems as if this day will never end \_\_\_\_\_ How can you say you're sorry if you feel that they have done you wrong \_\_\_\_\_ even if I want friend \_\_\_\_\_ If they go and play with some other friends \_\_\_\_\_ how can I join a game I know I would never play \_\_\_\_\_ you dont want to stay alone \_\_\_\_\_ Please just stay a true friend \_\_\_\_\_



## IV. FRIENDSHIP AND EVENT

SO, TO BEGIN AGAIN, from a different position. How do we say “Friend”? What does it mean?

In Agamben’s essay “The Friend,” he notes that friend is a sort of non-predicative term, that is, a term from which it is not possible to establish a class that includes all the things to which the predicate in question is attributed. When I say “I am your friend,” we cannot point at what is it that crosses all such utterance; much like the phrase “I love you,” whatever it means comes into being at the moment of its being said. It is simply a name which names.

In the curious case of insults, we find that often the insult is not the result of being compared to something undesirable but in being-named as such in a way that one cannot defend oneself. We think of children who insist on calling Nick “Rick,” and Nick cannot defend himself because there is simply nothing to defend in the being called as such. There is no way to defend oneself from being called a friend, or being beloved. The naming of the friend as such is an event in itself, it calls forth and brings into being. It is not a definition, it calls upon nothing prior to itself, but it names the being together of those who are there.

How do we say “friend”? I think of those of you in this room whom I would call friend but couldn’t, for whom I couldn’t say a middle name or perhaps even a first. I certainly know nothing of your virtue, but you do, in fact, fall among my group of friends—I would even go so far as to say you are my friends, my good friends, my true friends. We know this when we are together and do what only friends can do. It’s not that we are tied together by utility, though certainly we use each other in certain ways to achieve a goal. And we’re not particularly tied by pleasure, at least most of us. Our relationship is based on something else, and this something else is what we call whatever, our form of life, an entirely contingent and arbitrary but intimately important set of practices in which we share a common language, we understand one another. This is virtually the opposite of what Aristotle would define as a true friend. What ties us together is not language—remember, it’s the activity between us that gives us language. Rather, it is silence, and what happens in silence.

—Friendship. Friendship, then. Friendship as event. I think, hopefully, perhaps, Nietzsche’s dangerous perhaps, I hope perhaps I have shown that friendship, at least inasmuch as Aristotle has conceived it for Western societies influenced by his thought,

is impossible. Impossible, not for the least reason, that we are wholly unwilling to accept how he defines equality within the virtuous friendship.

Because for Aristotle, within the true and virtuous friendship, my friend and I accept our roles as they are and we respect one another for who we are—that is, virtuous bodies. We who do not respect property, authority, monogamy, prudence and other virtues can never, Aristotle says, have true friends. Not virtuous friends in Aristotle's sense of the word.

But Aristotle's sense of the word is inadequate for our form of life. I think that's already clear. Aristotle sees friendship as an attribute, a state of being. Really he's going about it all wrong. Perhaps Aristotle already has friends—we can assume as much if he's writing such chapters in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. His definitions and descriptions of friends read as a sort of praise of his friends and what they already share. We imagine he wrote this toward the end of his life, as he sorted through his collection of friends, judging and appraising their worth.

For us, though, friendship is still an unknown. Or at least, since you are still here reading, friendship is an activity that we are trying to discern as we are doing it. For Agamben, and so for us, friendship is what occurs in its utterance, that is, what occurs here, there, when I call you "Friend." I'm not pointing here to anything in my lecture or notes, but *here*, to the lived activity outside language. We do not want friendship to be another term we use to describe things as they are; for us friendship is still an event, an unknown.

From Derrida, we receive an ominous and illuminating message: "Friendship does not keep silence, it is preserved by silence." Here we challenge Aristotle directly. Friendship isn't the result of endless chatter and judgment of each other's virtue, but a shared experience in which we live in common and find ourselves headed in the same direction. To think alongside Wittgenstein again, there is that which can be expressed in propositions of language—say, my calling you "friend"—and that which can only be shown and never converted into words. Derrida's point, taken from Nietzsche, is that friends allow this *whatever* to lie between them, in silence.

For us, we share a form of life with an understanding of how the word "friend" is supposed to be used. But this doesn't mean we can use it. There is something missing if I simply call you all "friends"—it seems insincere, perhaps ungrammatical. After all, just because you've shown the willingness to sit through my bullshit doesn't mean we've had the event of friendship. Does it? I guess it depends. It's a perhaps. It depends on how this lecture ends.

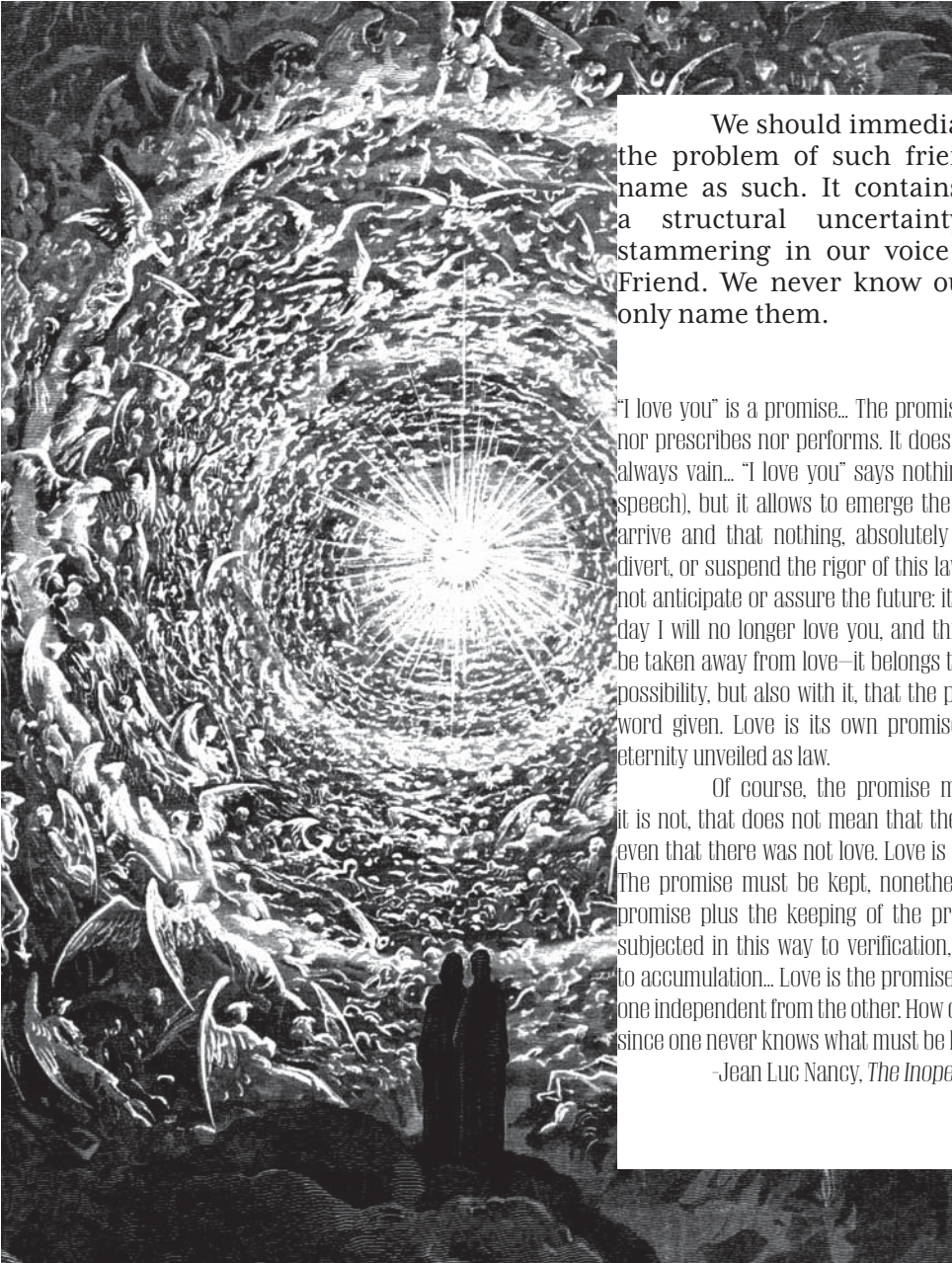
For Aristotle and his virtuous friends, they are friends because they are virtuous. And a part of their virtue lies in understanding each other's roles and what they are due each other as friends. The utilitarian friends are friends because they can exchange a quantifiable equal amount of money, or votes, or power, or whatever. Friends of pleasure have an understanding of what they expect from either their lover or beloved. A proper inequality. But friends of virtue exchange and share equal virtue, they practice virtue together. They each give the other what is due them, although the exchange rate may mean trading money for honor, or praise for assistance, and so on. Aristotle names his friends after the event has concluded, and although he claims that his friendship is without justice, it is not until the quantities are calculated that one may or may not be called friend. This is friendship that demands the possible, and for that it deserves nothing but our contempt. Aristotle tests others and then names them as friends. Whatever it names has already disappeared.

For friendship to have meaning, it must be named in the event, and the event to which it gives name must carry in itself the fullest meaning of friendship. All friendship, as we have seen, carries within it the possibility of its collapse. But while Aristotle would demand that we be virtuous, we must ask what friendship becomes without virtue; when we prefer to take what is rather than some nonexistent noble virtue.

So, while Aristotle looks for those who are friends and finds himself lacking (O my friends! There is no friend!), we friends of anarchy must look for friendships of potentiality and becoming, always leaving open the perhaps of total collapse. This is a friendship that truly deserves the name—because we know, from where we are now, that we are never assured of adequation between our naming, the concept, and the event of friend. We know friendship must leave a place open for that which can still take place—by chance—that possibility that would be more favorable to the love whose just name would be friendship.

We know that when friendship claims to be realized, there is in fact no friendship. We utter "Friend" and "I love you" in moments of wild abandon before the scores are calculated, when our relationships are at their most delicate and fragile.

So, Friend is something we are trying to create, ever trying to create. We are in search of a singularity, the becoming-friendship of love, under the same name of friendship, but this time under the right name, just this one time, adjusted rather to an incomparable time, unique and without concept, a particular date, between two. The friendship of these friends, if there are any of this kind, should there be any of this kind, should take place one fine day, in the chance of a moment, an instant, with no assurance of duration, without the firm constancy of Aristotelian virtue—this is the condition of the pure potentiality of friendship.



We should immediately recognize the problem of such friends, those we name as such. It contains a “perhaps,” a structural uncertainty, a certain stammering in our voice as we speak. Friend. We never know our friends, we only name them.

“I love you” is a promise... The promise neither describes nor prescribes nor performs. It does nothing and thus is always vain... “I love you” says nothing (except a limit of speech), but it allows to emerge the fact that love must arrive and that nothing, absolutely nothing, can relax, divert, or suspend the rigor of this law. The promise does not anticipate or assure the future: it is possible that one day I will no longer love you, and this possibility cannot be taken away from love—it belongs to it. It is against this possibility, but also with it, that the promise is made, the word given. Love is its own promised eternity, its own eternity unveiled as law.

Of course, the promise must be kept. But if it is not, that does not mean that there was no love, nor even that there was not love. Love is faithful only to itself. The promise must be kept, nonetheless love is not the promise plus the keeping of the promise. It cannot be subjected in this way to verification, to justification, and to accumulation... Love is the promise and its keeping, the one independent from the other. How could it be otherwise, since one never knows what must be kept?

-Jean Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*

## V. THERE IS NO FRIEND

NOW THEN, SECTION FIVE. IS THIS DOING PHILOSOPHY? I don't think I've covered anything I said I would in the description. My throat hurts from cigarettes. I'm getting exhausted and I'm not sure I'm getting anywhere. All these pulled quotes from Derrida have gotten me nowhere. And this odd claim, whatever I've been getting towards, that there are no friends, only events, moments, of friendship, and perhaps we have not even had one yet. How do we even know afterwards? It strikes one almost as cold and empty and a bit sociopathic. Moreover, how can any meaningful politics come from this?

I don't know how much time I've taken up in reading this to you so far. It feels like I've written a lot but not really said much. It's 1 pm, yesterday, I'm in the lobby and most of you are in some workshop or another having a common experience that will give you new language, or new ways in which to speak with one another. I am out here alone, in my own world, writing, writing in silence in what I hope is a successful attempt to find friends. Perhaps you'll be in luck, and at the end of this I'll take questions after all. I'm sure you're thrilled at the prospect.

I mentioned earlier the *Whatever*, a term I'll readily admit has been abused by some in our anarchic milieu of late. Agamben mentions that the *Whatever Singularity* is "whatever you want, that is, loveable." He wrote a whole book about it; it's pretty obtuse, but I'll collapse it and say basically I think he means we should stop looking around trying to find friends and instead start making friends, or, doing friendship, with those bodies with whom we share a form of life, the ones who understand what we mean when we say "friend," or more importantly understand when we *do friendship*. And in doing so, we are creating a new form of life, developing new practices—creating new meanings for friendship in friendship.

This is largely, I think, grounded in the idea that we can lose ourselves—our predicates, our identities—in the Event. Maybe you've experienced this total loss of self, maybe not. I have, but then my self was found and things turned out pretty shitty [ed. note: a reference to ongoing legal troubles]. So really, the *whatever* might be a good concept for philosophy, and if you want experimentation and danger and the possibility and ever-present threat of being hurt—which is basically what friendship is, right—then *Whatever* might be a good way to go.

So far we seem to understand that friendship, at least as a thing to have as a relational quality, friendness or whatever we might say, might be impossible. It's like running en masse with the cops closing in, and we call out "Friends!"—and they are there, or else they aren't. Even the naming, the event of friendship, is not itself what makes friends. It's something else something beyond us, something *whatever*, that

propels and captures us and forces us to be friends. And this something-beyond or something else also creates the conditions in which our friendships collapse.

We were friends and have become estranged. But this was right... That we have to become estranged is the law above us; by the same token we should also become more venerable for each other—and the memory of our former friendship more sacred. There is probably a tremendous but invisible stellar orbit in which our very different ways and goals may be included as small parts of this path; let us rise up to this thought. But our life is too short and our power of vision too small for us to be more than friends in the sense of this sublime possibility! — Let us then believe in our star friendship even if we should be compelled to be earthly enemies.

–Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

The end of friendship takes on new meaning if we are thinking the eventness of friendship. We could say friendship ends with its enunciation: “FRIEND!” And then it is gone. Or we could say friend points to our being-there-together, being-in-common, that activity at which my words point when I voice “FRIEND.”

But we would be missing a properly grammatical use of the word friend if we were only able to imagine friends here and around us. When we say friend to those far off, we are referring to a certain distance, the distance itself, the nothing that is being shared at that moment. There is no activity of friendship outside my naming it as such; when my friend back home is off in her own world living her own life, perhaps I’m not even on her mind. But friend doesn’t refer to a different state of affairs—it refers to this one, in which we are not thinking of one another, or even perhaps when we are thinking crossly of one another.

If we are attempting to move away from thinking of friend as a quality, “being friend,” and rather friendship as an event, “doing friend,” we have to locate this time element within the event that marks off its existence—the beginning and end of the event.

T— is sitting next to me. She sits. The event begins. We chat about the workshop she just attended. She leaves. Where does our friendship begin or end? Is it in the sitting together? Our first words? Is friendship something that passes between us, is it something we dwell in? Are we friends now, when I am writing here alone and she is in line for food? I’m tempted to say—yes, absolutely, after all, this is just some attempt at metaphysical philosophical bullshit. I know how to use the word friend, and it means what the two of us are together right now. But what are we? How are we that? Where is this friendship thing that supposedly ties us to one another in some manner?



C— sits next to me. *I'm writing about friends*, I say. *She wouldn't know about that*, she says. Friendship, that is. She can't locate it. We chat. We're still not friends. We make sexy faces at one another and she gets up to leave. Someone takes her chair but I don't think to say that she was sitting there. Am I a bad friend? He gets up and she doesn't know what just transpired, how my own self-absorption nearly just cost us our friendship, a friendship that perhaps doesn't even exist at all.

Or else, it was a friendship that collapsed, momentarily, exactly in the manner in which it began—an inopportune moment in which we were thrust forward toward one another and could only respond in the manner in which we were ourselves: our form of life revealed itself to one another and we found—briefly—community, friendship, love together. Alternately, we can imagine that, having suddenly altered the terms of our activity, we might have found ourselves inhabiting a different form of life in which our activities took on completely different meanings and we could only know one another as enemies.

The silence that preserves friendship is more than the activity between friends: it is the nothing and emptiness—which is to say, truth—that we hold between us. Derrida has us saying that friends keep silent about the truth. This is less enigmatic than we might think. Our friends, those to whom we expose our vulnerability and ugliness, preserve friendship by keeping quiet on these matters. What a horror it would be to hear what our friends actually know about us! And that much worse to read it.

This black eruption, the supernova that is the destruction of our star of friendship. Suddenly every gesture takes on new meaning. Our words mismatch. Our attempt to communicate can only result in conflict.

But *enemy*. The correlate of that Aristotle quote or misquote: O enemies, there is no enemy. If “friend” brings with it no necessary precondition, then in reference to “enemy”—this enemy who has relinquished her silence, our silence—we cannot accept any prescribed manner of dealing with the enemy. After all, just as each friendship blooms in its own way, so too does each bursting star erupt in its own way. How to contain a dying star, without ourselves exploding; how to see the beauty of a dying star?

I apologize. Distractions. All of you are here in the room with me now; not now, as I read this to you (as you read this without me), but *now*, the time of writing. Now, the time of verbalization. The panel about “anarchist practice” is about to begin. I'm once again alone in a crowd of friends. I don't want to think of supernovas; too depressing. Broken hearts perhaps suit me better, at least in my current frame of mind.

I don't know, maybe you wanted a strategy outline or something, but it's nearly five o'clock in the morning and so it's come to this. Performance art, or lived poetry. Some crap like that. Really, that's all I've got. Potentiality, man. I'm not talking about the T-word, or *make total destroy* necessarily. What we need is the demand to experiment;

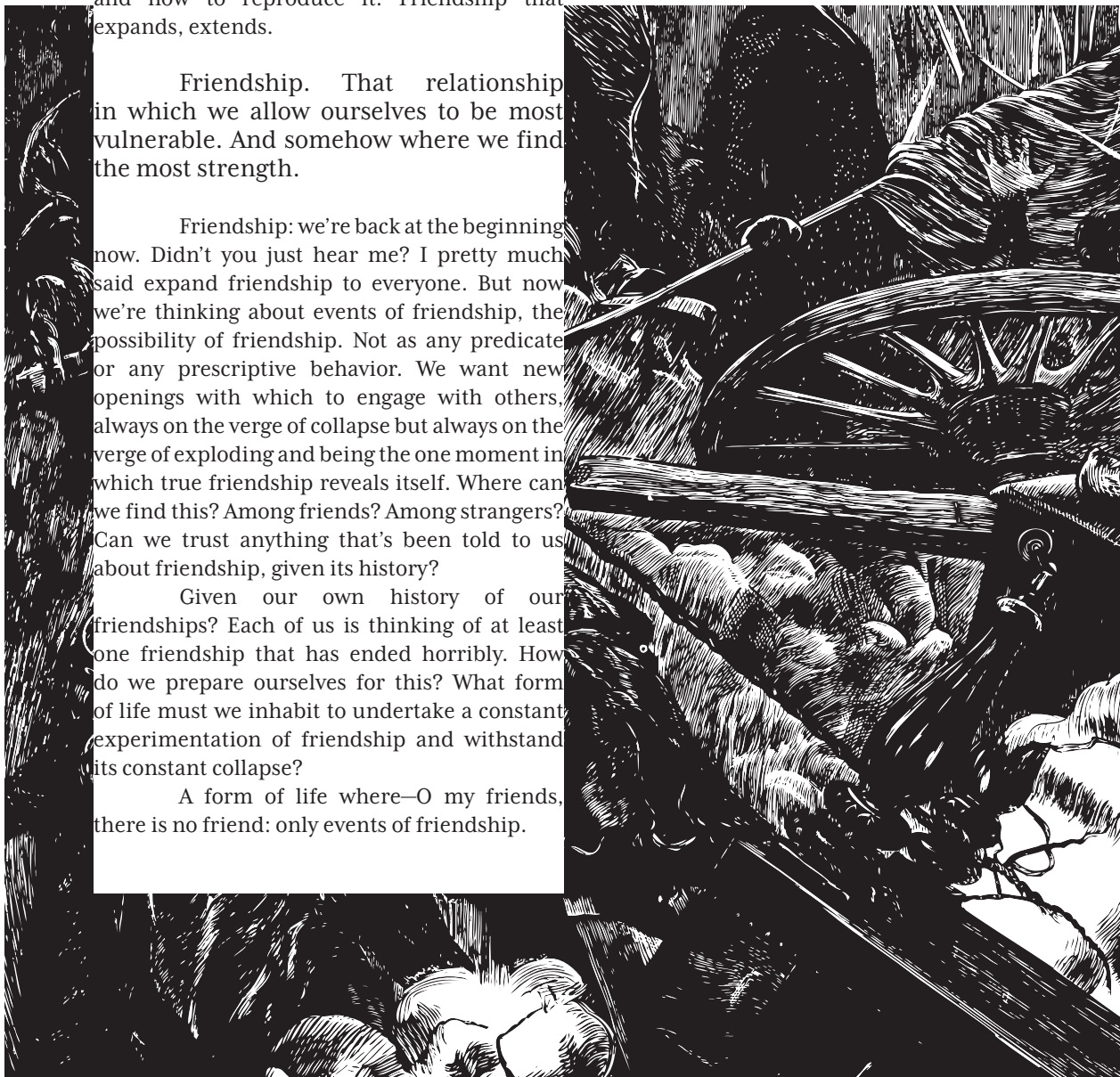
experimentation to find the pure friendship and how to reproduce it. Friendship that expands, extends.

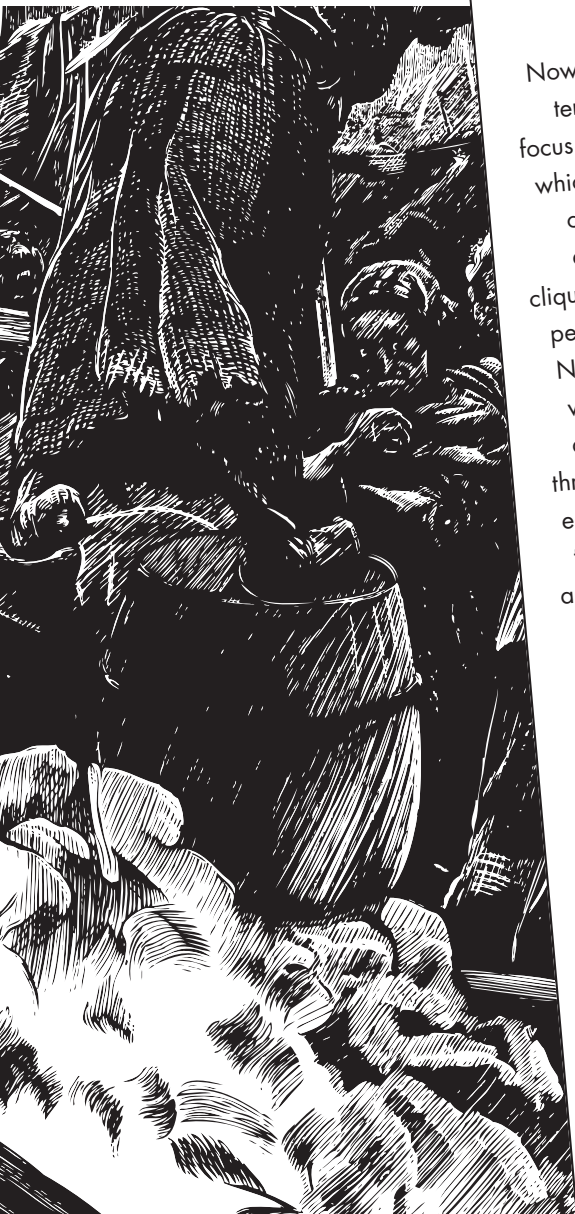
Friendship. That relationship in which we allow ourselves to be most vulnerable. And somehow where we find the most strength.

Friendship: we're back at the beginning now. Didn't you just hear me? I pretty much said expand friendship to everyone. But now we're thinking about events of friendship, the possibility of friendship. Not as any predicate or any prescriptive behavior. We want new openings with which to engage with others, always on the verge of collapse but always on the verge of exploding and being the one moment in which true friendship reveals itself. Where can we find this? Among friends? Among strangers? Can we trust anything that's been told to us about friendship, given its history?

Given our own history of our friendships? Each of us is thinking of at least one friendship that has ended horribly. How do we prepare ourselves for this? What form of life must we inhabit to undertake a constant experimentation of friendship and withstand its constant collapse?

A form of life where—O my friends, there is no friend: only events of friendship.





## Blistering Critique:

Now we were getting to the heart of the matter. “No, I mean that I’m not sure about the focus on friendship as a privileged space from which to fight, as if friendship were somehow outside the dynamics that make everything else so rotten.” That hit close to home—my clique had broken with hers as a result of interpersonal conflicts long before most people in North America had even heard of them. This was the first conversation we’d had in half a decade. “Of course, I can’t help but see this through the lens of how people have interpreted your material in the US, but it seems to me that social relationships are just as colonized as economic or political relationships, and just as fragile—look at how ours ended.”

“You know, we also have had this conversation,” she answered. “In fact, there was a split inside our group. Before they left, some of the people involved wrote a text called *The Terrible Community*.”

Affinity-based projects can be more efficient than any army of employees because the wheels are greased with affection—enabling them to sustain stark challenges and heavy workloads. But when they finally collapse, they crush us in the crash.

# SELF-DESTRUCTION

On December 17, 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in response to his treatment by Tunisian police, setting off a chain reaction worldwide. Let no one forget that the wave of uprisings still sweeping the globe did not simply spring from the hard work of activists, however long some labored to pave the way. It did not begin with people setting out to better themselves or the world. It began with the ultimate gesture of despair and self-destruction.

ON





**B**ouazizi was not enacting a strategy. He was alone, as alone as a person can be. By drawing back the curtain from injustice so we could come together to fight it, he gave us a precious gift, but a costlier gift than we have any right to receive. The European Parliament awarded him a posthumous Sakharov Prize, but he died knowing only that he had acted on his humiliation and rage, to no end other than to express them. His death hangs in eternity as an irreparable tragedy. We might say the same of so many others who have thrown away their lives in the history of revolutionary struggle.

What can we learn, then, from this man who gave free vegetables to poor families, who had to buy his wares on credit the way many of us must, who reacted against the same policing that imposes inequalities in the US? First, that misery is the same the world over today, even if it assumes different forms. But we can go further: in Bouazizi's example, we see what it takes to *get out of here* even if we do not wish to ignite a worldwide conflagration but simply to change our own lives.

What would life be like after a revolution? The dishwasher pictures a dishroom without a boss. The renter imagines herself in the same little hovel, rent-free. The shopper looks forward to stores without checkout counters. We can hardly imagine beyond this horizon—yet surely it would be easier to change everything entirely than to build a version of this world in which the same institutions and

habits magically cease to be oppressive. When what we are intrinsically determined by capitalism, it's not enough to try to better ourselves; we have to *cease to be* ourselves.

In the era of precarity, this is clearer than ever. Globalization has swept the entire population of the planet into one labor pool that competes for the same jobs; mechanization is replacing those jobs, rendering us more and more disposable. In this context, those who set out merely to defend their positions in the economy are doomed. Look at the student movement of 2009-2010, or the protests in Wisconsin last spring: these rearguard struggles to preserve the privileges of a particular demographic could only fail. Today we can neither found our strategy on incremental victories—we are in no more of a position to win them than our rulers are to grant them—nor on the fixed roles that once gave the general

strike its force. We have to fight from our shared vulnerability: not on the basis of what we are, but of what we will not be.

The only thing that can bind us in this is our willingness to renounce, to defect, to fight—to abolish the system that created us. This means altering our lives beyond recognition. There are no guarantees in this undertaking; it takes self-destructive abandon. We must not celebrate this, but there is no getting around it.

Nothing is more terrifying than departing from what we know. It may take more courage to do this *without* killing oneself than it does to light oneself on fire. Such courage is easier to find in company; there is so much we can do together that we cannot do as individuals. If he had been able to participate in a powerful social movement, perhaps Bouazizi would never have committed suicide; but paradoxically, for such a thing to be possible, each of us has to take a step analogous to the one he took into the void.

We cannot imagine what Bouazizi went through, nor the hundreds upon hundreds of others who have lost their lives in the struggles throughout North Africa since—only a minute fraction of the casualties of capitalism this past year. Yet in embracing destruction on his own terms, he at least opened a path to something else. When a youngster hoods up for a black bloc or a middle-aged secretary moves into an encampment, departing from all they know, all they have been, they can hope to do the same.

Let's make our despair into a transformative force. Perhaps we can give a positive meaning to the saying that is so chilling in reference to the gift Mohamed Bouazizi gave us: you have to be ready to die to be ready to live.





**"THE  
TRANSFORMED  
SPEAKS ONLY TO  
RELINQUISHERS.  
ALL HOLDERS-ON  
ARE STRANGLERS."**

-RAINER MARIA RILKE

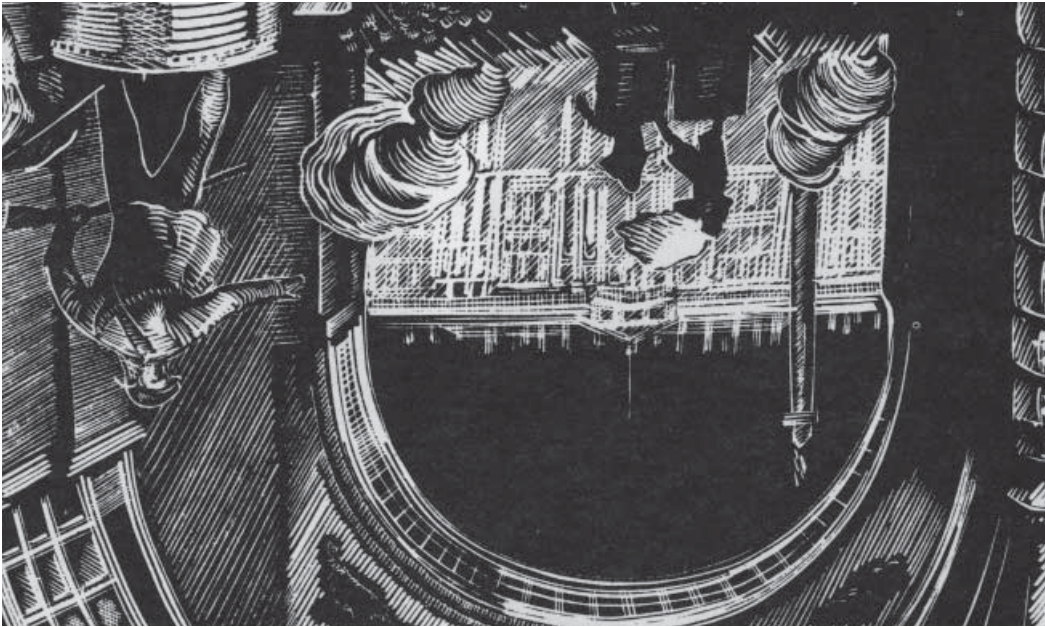
**Blistering Critique:**

"...and so by fearing to risk, we impose the worst-case scenario upon ourselves—and upon everyone! If I commit suicide on account of the wretchedness of this world, my blood will be on your hands!"

My partner rubbed his palms together, miming a Sadean pleasure at others' suffering as a consequence of his refusal to overthrow capitalism:  
"Ah, your blood is on my hands!"

I

t is the gloomy end of 1921; an icy drizzle patters the grey streets of Hamburg. All the uprisings have failed: Rosa Luxembour<sup>g</sup>'s waterlogged corpse lies in the Landwehr Canal, while Makhno languishes in a Romanian internment camp.



The guests gather in the drawing room: fugitive nihilists, scowling conspirators, ragged authors and dandyish defendants. They take turns holding their hands up to the fireplace and stalking about, fists in pockets. The conversation drifts from Kronstadt to the rising price of bread. Kerosene casts a flickering light from the mantelpiece; the figures at the edge

of its glow could be George Grosz, Hannah Höch, Max Beckman. Egon Schiele is there, spectral, an underage mistress at his side.

At length, their host enters, a black great-coat dramatizing his bulk. Some used to call him the Thaumaturge, not without a little irony. No one has seen him in years.

“I’ve summoned you all here to share something momentous with you. While you were out fomenting revolution and popularizing this thing you call Dada, I sequestered myself to study the science of telekinesis. I am finally prepared to demonstrate my findings.”



He holds a needle up between his thumb and forefinger so it catches the lamp-light—a flash of silver—and sets it upon the stool before him with great formality.

“Watch as I lift this needle into the air.”

He pulls an overstuffed armchair up to the stool and seats himself before it. The guests encircle him three rows deep as he commences concentrating. The needle is almost invisible upon the stool; the guests strain their eyes to see it. It does not appear to be moving.

Time slows to a crawl. The veins stand out on the Thaumaturge’s forehead, stark in the breathless silence. The lamp sputters. The tension is unbearable.

Finally, a guest whispers to his neighbor, eliciting an answering whisper. Someone surreptitiously uncorks a bottle of wine; it begins to make the rounds along with more whispering. A nervous chuckle gives way to outright laughter, and everyone begins to converse freely—but for the rotund man in the great-coat, who is fully immersed in his effort.

The doorman arrives to deliver a message and the guests invite him in, jovially explaining what their host is up to. The cook shows up a few minutes later, snacking on a scrap of chicken; they force her to return to the kitchen and bring back enough for everyone. The party turns raucous. A procession of llamas files through the room, driven by a stone-faced Sherpa. The Thaumaturge and the needle remain motionless.

Across the Pyrenees and the Strait of Gibraltar, the young poet Robert Desnos is working late, the odd shooting star falling into his glass. The passing moon hooks him by the collar on its crescent tip and carries him north over the city, the desert, the coast. He sees the starlight on the crests of the restless sea, strikebreakers laboring on torchlit docks, orphans sleeping on the steps of cathedrals.

The guests in the drawing room are becoming restless and belligerent as the bottles empty. They begin slip out of the room—first one at a time, but then in twos and threes. The last ones to leave practically scramble out the door.

The hubbub recedes. Silence. The coals of the fire are blinking out. Only the Thaumaturge remains, immobile, his eyes fixed on the needle before him, his entire being concentrated into a single point of will. The needle does not move.

"HER PARENTS GAVE HER NO NAME BUT REFERRED TO HER IN A HISTORICAL MANNER AS 'THE DESTROYER.' WHENEVER ANYTHING WENT RIGHT IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD SHE PUT IT WRONG AGAIN."

-LAURA RIDING, **ANARCHISM IS NOT ENOUGH**





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"ANARCHISM IS A CRIME AGAINST THE WHOLE  
HUMAN RACE. ALL MANKIND SHOULD BAND TO-  
GETHER AGAINST THE ANARCHISTS." -THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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IF SOMEONE  
IS FALLING,  
GIVE HIM  
A PUSH.



-G. GROSZ