

"She would have
snatched her picture off the
easel, but she said to herself, One
must. She braced herself to stand the
awful trial of some one looking at her
picture. One must, she said, one must.
And if it must be seen, Mr. Bankes was less
alarming than another. But that any other
eyes should see the residue of her thirty-
three years, the deposit of each day's
living mixed with something more secret
than she had ever spoken or shown in the
course of all those days was an agony.
At the same time it was immensley
exciting."

(From Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*)

"I've never said life is meaningless, I've said it is tragic. I think it is intensely precious. God, sometimes I think I'm so happy I don't know what to do with me. But it hurts like hell."



James Wright in a 1975 interview

(one)

Dear _____,

You know I own a lot of books, more than I will be able to read in my life time. At least not read well. A lot of times when people see my books they assume I am smart, or call me a nerd. Maybe I am. For me reading books is often a desperate search. I like to think there is a letter hidden inside their pages, written specifically for me to find. Once the girl I love most in this world came to visit me. We hadn't seen each other in years. It didn't go very well because I was with someone else and so was she. I wanted to spend the night with her in my bed, not to have sex with her or even necessarily to kiss her. Just to hold her and wake beside her. To smell her and see how her body had changed and how it had stayed the same. It didn't happen. The only time we touched is when I hugged her as she cried in the street, reminding me of when I first held her as she cried over a different boy on the streets of a different city. When she was done crying I let her go and she said "this time you have to walk away." And I did, even though I didn't want to. I haven't seen her since, but we still talk on the phone sometimes.

Months after we parted I woke from a

dream I have since forgotten. Half asleep I looked around my room and started studying my bookshelf. I was certain that there was a letter from her tucked inside one of the books. I knew it was ridiculous, but we had talked about such things before. Every time I gave her a book she checked it for a secret note placed somewhere in the pages for her to find days or even weeks/years later. Once it went so far that she handed me her diary and told me I could write something in it. But I didn't. It was too much pressure. Anyway, that night I actually looked through a few of my books, the ones she knew were my favorites. I didn't find anything.

That kind of hidden letter is not the kind I am normally searching for.

It's actually even more ridiculous. I read books hoping that the author has written a subtle message in it for me. How does a lonely man communicate his thoughts to unknown friends? I think he writes novels, poetry, philosophy books intended to endure through time. And he hopes that somehow they will fall into the right hands. I like to pretend I am one of those people, one of the intended recipients. That is how I read Pascal, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Rimbaud, Borowski, and Cormac McCarthy. Just to name a few. It is especially how I read Machiavelli. He is a liar and tricky when he writes. And he is one of the discontent, writing to the young and for those who have virtù and want to transform their state.

Machiavelli also wrote beautiful letters. Just read this passage from his letter to Francesco Vettori:

"When I leave the wood, I go to a spring, and from there to an aviary of mine. I have a book under my arm, Dante or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets like Tibullus, Ovid, and such. I read of their amorous passions and their loves; I remember my own and enjoy myself for a while in this thinking. Then I move on along the road to the inn; I speak with those passing



by; I ask them news of their places; I learn various things; and I note the various tastes and different fancies of men. In the meantime comes the hour to dine, when I eat with my company what food this poor villa and tiny patrimony allow. Having eaten, I return to the inn; there is the host, ordinarily a butcher, a miller, two bakers. With them I become a rascal for the whole day, playing at cricca and tric-trac, from which arise a thousand quarrels and countless abuses with insulting words, and most times we are fighting over a penny and yet we can be heard shouting from San Casciano. Thus involved with these vermin I scrape the mold off my brain and I satisfy the malignity of this fate of mine, as I am content to be trampled on this path so as to see if she will be ashamed of it.

When evening has come, I return to my house and go into my study. At the door I take off my clothes of the day, covered with mud and mire, and I put on my regal and courtly garments; and decently reclothed, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for. There I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity reply to me. And for the space of four hours I feel no boredom, I forget every pain, I do not fear poverty, death does not frighten me. I deliver myself entirely to them."

Sorry that passage was so long, it is just real important to me. I too attempt to enter the

courts of ancient men. And I search their books for letters. I talk to Machiavelli the most. I'm not sure he likes me, or approves of me, but I think we understand each other.

This is a zine composed of letters. I have left the addressee blank because there are so many of yous that I write to. Some I know, some are dead, still others have yet to be born. Some I love, some I fight with and against, some I see every day, and some I miss very much.

The "I" I write with is just as variable as the "you." Though the same hand writes each letter, the needs and desires, the drives behind each pen stroke, is different.

"Free will," Flannery O'Connor writes in her preface to *Wise Blood*, "does not mean one will, but many wills conflicting in one man." Though my heart is constant, the way it expresses itself is ever variable. But what is constant in my heart? It is the love I carry and my desire to find others. Others who may have lost many things in this world, but who have drawn a line around the love in their hearts and who will defend that love at all costs.

I hope you are well,

patrokolos

(Two)

Dear _____,

I know you are not a believer, and that some Christians have done bad things to you. My father is a minister and so is his mother. I've got an aunt and uncle who were missionaries for a long time and I have another uncle who is a minister. My brother is a youth minister. Even my former step-father is a minister. Still, even though it has always been around me, I can't believe. I wish I did though. I think it would be easier to have something above me to tell me what it means to be good. The horse is good when it is good for us. Same with the dog or whatever other animal. But if you don't believe then what is there higher than you to tell you if you are good? How do the good know they are good?

I get along with Christians pretty well. A number of my closest friends are Catholics. We have an understanding since we all want to create a genuine human community. Of course, they want a community of faith and I want a community of friendship. Still it is something we share. One of them calls me a secret Christian. He says I just need to keep doing what I am doing and wait for God to touch my heart. I don't know what I think about that.

Last Easter my mom and I were driving back from my brother's house. I told her I couldn't believe because the resurrection of the body seemed



"He carried within himself a great reverence for the world, this priest. He heard the voice of the Deity in the murmur of the wind in the trees. Even the stones were sacred. He was a reasonable man and he believed that there was love in his heart.

There was not. Nor does God whisper through the trees."

- Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing*

ridiculous to me. She reminded me that my grandmother hadn't wanted to be cremated when she died because she thought she'd need her body on judgment day. I reminded her of I Corinthians 15:19 where Paul writes "If in this life alone we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We were both quiet



for a while. I saw some vultures picking through a dead deer on the roadside but I didn't point them out.

I do believe in the unutterable mysteries of the world. A strangeness that at times overwhelms me with terror and ~~awe~~ awe. Take Darwin and theories of evolution that propose that all living things descended from one life form, for example. I think about that creature, about how all

of life was once concentrated inside it, and how for some reason that life started dividing and is now in a multitude of beings. Each one of them striving against the others. All at war with all. The bison, crickets, chickadees, even the lillies all endeavoring against me. Some people think nature is made for man, they don't look into it and see what I see. Indifference, if not active hostility. As the sergeant says in Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*, "Look at this jungle. Look at those vines, the way they twine around the trees swallowing everything. Nature's cruel."

And yet I love it still.

It is beautiful and I feel at home in its wildness.

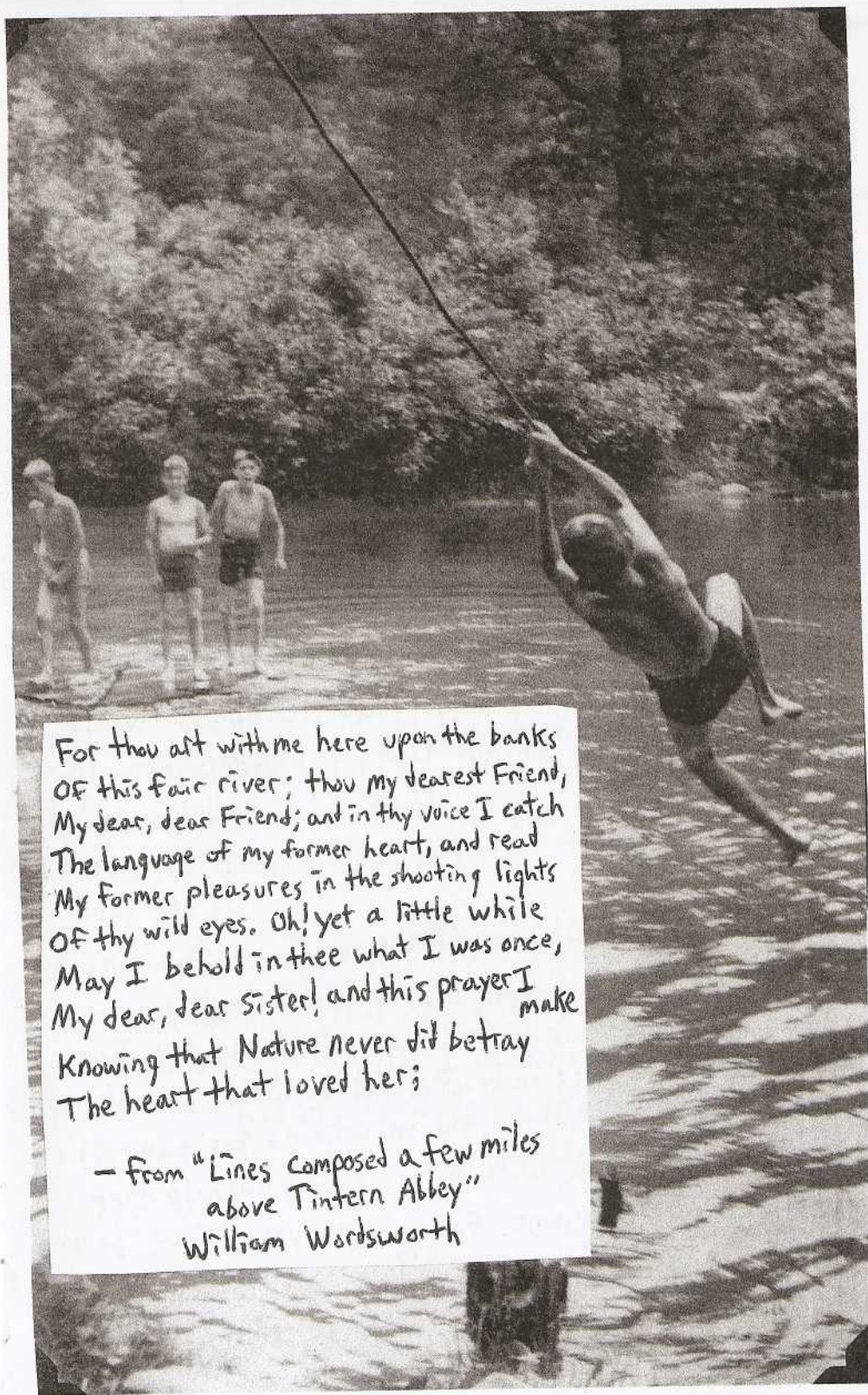
When the last war came, a number of my friends went to the streets to protest. I joined them, but amidst those thousands of people I felt terribly alone. The answers I sought were not present and the fights with cops, though exciting, merely underlined my questions. So I went to the woods. I shouted at the birds and squirrels, the acorns and grasses. I demanded they justify their existence to me. I said that how they revealed themselves to scientists was not enough. I did not want mathematical formulas or charts of data. There was no answer, of course. The things of nature know nothing of justice, or if they do it is in a language I do not know.

A few weeks ago I slept in the mountains, beneath more stars than I had ever seen before, and I dreamt of you. In the dream you finally told me why

you had to leave me. You had become a vegetarian and I ate meat again, so we weren't able to cook our meals together. It seems silly now, when I am awake writing it down, but in the dream nothing seemed more clear or obvious. It was as if a great yet simple truth, one I had somehow known all my life, had finally been said out loud. I woke at dawn to a profound stillness and quiet. It seemed as if the world had stopped, as if time progressed for me alone. All life, all motion, felt concentrated in my breast. As if Being was saying "we have chosen you, have chosen your project, what you think is most important we have also deemed most important. Go, complete your task. We will wait and begin again when you are done." I whispered aloud, "what if I am an ordinary man? What if my only desire is to stand before one who I love?" And still there was no sound, no movement, as if the world was saying, "that is okay. We still approve." I unzipped my sleeping bag and rose.

I did not make it five steps before a blue jay saw me and called out, starting the world again. For a moment I thought I might cry, but instead I started a fire to make bacon and coffee.

I miss you,
patrolcolos



For thou art with me here upon the banks
OF this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
OF thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; ^{make}

- from "Lines composed a few miles
above Tintern Abbey"
William Wordsworth

(three)

Dear _____,

I know it has been difficult to keep in touch with me, since I move around so much. I can't explain why I do it. I used to be unable to stay in one place because it felt like there were so many places in the world to see, so many things to do. But now no matter where I go my daily activities remain the same. Drink coffee, read, go for long walks, write things I'll never have the courage to share, lie awake in bed long into the night. It still seems nice to travel around, but I realize now that you've got to have a home too. You've got to have people to go back to and share the things inside you. Otherwise you're just an orphan or exile, a hermit among people, wandering the world and experiencing things that eventually become unspeakable. I guess that I travel around because I don't have a home and I am searching for ~~a~~ one.

I'm in Salt Lake City now. I can't say much about the city because I'm shy and don't go out often, but I want to tell you about my job. I'm working as a field instructor at a wilderness therapy program. I go out to the mountains for a week at a time and work with kids, trying to help them learn how to care for themselves. I've been working mostly with the boys who are addicted to drugs. They like me because

they can tell that I enjoy their company, and even though I don't tell them much about my past they know that I've been through some things myself.

What I do talk to them about is modern physics, or definitions of freedom besides "lack of restraint." I show them how to find the north star and I help them spell words they have trouble with when writing letters to their parents. I teach them some Roman history and I listen to them when they try to articulate what it felt like when they realized they could beat their dad up if he tried to hit them again. I listen to a lot. Sometimes, like Cindy Crabb wrote in Doris #4, "i get worried when someone opens their mouth that i'll listen too hard and won't let go." But I manage somehow. I check their feet for blisters or athlete's foot. I put scar creams on their healing suicide attempts. I hug them when we part and tell them I might not see them again. I listen to them talk about huffing dust-off or carrying guns and I think about my dead friends, only one of which I have an image of. I keep my mouth shut. I tell them they aren't bad kids. If they ask me if they have to do something I tell them that they don't have to do anything but die and that I will not let them die while they are with me. I tell them they never have to feel ashamed when talking to me, that they don't have to pretend they only did drugs because of peer pressure or depression, they

(three)

Dear _____,

I know it has been difficult to keep in touch with me, since I move around so much. I can't explain why I do it. I used to be unable to stay in one place because it felt like there were so many places in the world to see, so many things to do. But now no matter where I go my daily activities remain the same. Drink coffee, read, go for long walks, write things I'll never have the courage to share, lie awake in bed long into the night. It still seems nice to travel around, but I realize now that you've got to have a home too. You've got to have people to go back to and share the things inside you. Otherwise you're just an orphan or exile, a hermit among people, wandering the world and experiencing things that eventually become unspeakable. I guess that I travel around because I don't have a home and I am searching for ~~the~~ one.

I'm in Salt Lake City now. I can't say much about the city because I'm shy and don't go out often, but I want to tell you about my job. I'm working as a field instructor at a wilderness therapy program. I go out to the mountains for a week at a time and work with kids, trying to help them learn how to care for themselves. I've been working mostly with the boys who are addicted to drugs. They like me because

they can tell that I enjoy their company, and even though I don't tell them much about my past they know that I've been through some things myself.

What I do talk to them about is modern physics, or definitions of freedom besides "lack of restraint." I show them how to find the north star and I help them spell words they have trouble with when writing letters to their parents. I teach them some Roman history and I listen to them when they try to articulate what it felt like when they realized they could beat their dad up if he tried to hit them again. I listen to a lot. Sometimes, like Cindy Crabb wrote in Doris #4, "I get worried when someone opens their mouth that I'll listen too hard and won't let go." But I manage somehow. I check their feet for blisters or athlete's foot. I put scar creams on their healing suicide attempts. I hug them when we part and tell them I might not see them again. I listen to them talk about huffing dust-off or carrying guns and I think about my dead friends, only one of which I have an image of. I keep my mouth shut. I tell them they aren't bad kids. If they ask me if they have to do something I tell them that they don't have to do anything but die and that I will not let them die while they are with me. I tell them they never have to feel ashamed when talking to me, that they don't have to pretend they only did drugs because of peer pressure or depression, they

the persecuter. So they actually need to keep the persecuter, or find a new one, so they can maintain their victim/rescue roles. Think of knights, dragons, damsels. They can of course switch roles or play a ~~and~~ combination of roles, but they keep playing the game.

I don't think Karpman did this, but one could apply this model to a larger scale. Say there is a group of people who all get off on helping some other segment of society but who help them with charity and don't change the essential relations. You now have a picture of the non profit complex and the activist mindset in general. But this is not a new observation. Ted Kaczynski already pointed it out in section 22 of "Industrial Society and its Future" where he wrote "if our society had no social problems at all leftists would have to invent problems in order to provide themselves with an excuse for making a fuss." Invent problems or find victims, but if there isn't one you could always make some victims. Luckily for leftists there is another solution: never give people a means to actual power.

Anyway, I've played the drama triangle game a lot. Primarily with women. Looking back now it seems so obvious that I played the rescuer/persecuter, less frequently the victim, in almost every relationship I've been in. Several times I've started to date girls within weeks, if not days, of their survival of a sexual assault. I'd listen carefully, give them a copy of Support, talk about safe spaces, tell them about my own history. It made me feel important, made

me feel like I really had survived my own abuse history. It was so fucked up. I would sleep next to people I didn't want to because "they needed me." I'd put my own desires on hold to the point where now I can barely even say aloud to someone "I want..." All because I wanted to be strong, wanted them to see me as strong. I'd stay in relationships I didn't want to be in for months because I'd convince myself they were too fragile. And some of my partners acted this way. They'd cry about how they didn't have friends and then we'd play the "yes, but..." game. It was terrible, for both of us.

It would get worse. Even though I placed myself in the rescuer role I blamed them. Even though I chose to put aside my desires, I'd resent them for not letting me speak. And I was suffocating, it's true, but she was too. I'd convince myself that they were holding me back, that if not for their weakness I would be great. I turned into the persecuter and resented her for the guilt I felt. Or she would persecute and I'd play the victim.

We did terrible things to each other. In one case it ended with ~~one~~ cheating on me and, to tell the truth I've never said aloud, I was glad she did it. I could break up with her without feeling guilty. But I loved her still. In a sick, but nonetheless true, way. I still feel that love sometimes, especially now that I can identify what was happening. Usual

though I just feel sad and ashamed of what my role was, with her and all the others I played that game with.

I am alone now, which is good I think. I'm relearning how to speak and pursuing what I want. Though this is a lonely life, and though I still carry, and probably always will carry, a secret sadness deep inside me that I can't touch and that is unspeakable, I am feeling better. Healthier. I used to look back at our time together as the brightest of my life, though I know it held darkness too. Perhaps it will be the brightest, but I think I can feel it getting light again. I am still breathing and the air is refreshing once again and Being is starting to once again shine forth.

I hope it is for you as well.

patrokolos



"My ~~test~~ heart's broken," he thought. "If I feel this way my heart must be broken."

After a while he heard his father blow out the lamp and go into his own room. He heard a wind come up in the trees outside and felt it come in cold through the screen. He lay for a long time with his face in the pillow and after a while he forgot to think

about Prudence and finally he went to sleep. When he awoke in the night he heard the wind in the hemlock trees outside the cottage and the waves of the lake coming in on the shore and he went back to sleep. In the morning there was a big wind blowing and the waves were running high up on the beach and he was awake a long time before he remembered that his heart was broken.

(From
Ten Indians
by
Ernest
Hemingway)

(four)

Dear _____,

You are quite right in what you say, and I can see why you are frustrated. I do say vague things about anarchists and at times describe myself as one, but I rarely go into details or offer reasons or explanations. Part of this is that I don't see the point. In his last film, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, Guy Debord says; "Perhaps we might not have been so ruthless if we had found some already initiated project that seemed to merit our support. But there was no such project. The only cause we supported we had to define and launch ourselves. There was nothing above us that we could respect. For someone who thinks and acts in this manner, there is no point in listening a moment too long to those who find something good, or even merely something worth tolerating, within the present conditions; nor to those who stray from the path they seemed to have intended to follow; nor even, in some cases, to those who simply don't catch on quickly enough." For a long time I ascribed to this. What do I stand to gain from debates with non-anarchists? Those conversations too often end with "sounds nice, but it will never happen" or an even less polite form of "you are ridiculous." What does it matter if I do convince? My so-called peers work, like me, in the service sector of the economy. Not at the point of production. We could

all go on strike and the wealthy would have a hard time getting a latte, I suppose. Should I go to the factory workers? Tell them what capitalism really is? I'm not so sure they don't already know that their lives consist of sleep, commute, work, commute, sleep. We could show them our great exciting alternative, anarchy, but unfortunately their wages and the threat of jail is more tangible. It has power behind it.

Leaving workers aside, I am not convinced that black clad youth armed with rocks and the latest crime-think critiques will start a riot that will lead to a massive rupture in the flow of commodities followed by a mass insurrection. Not that clashes with police aren't exciting and sexy and events that help us feel power. If we get away in the end, that is.

Despite all this, because you have asked repeatedly for an articulation, I will attempt to give a coherent account of my politics, or lack thereof.

"The founding act of the modern State," claims thesis 40 of *Introduction to Civil War*, "is the institution of the fictitious split between public and private, between political and moral." We have the freedom to believe what we want, be it alien conspiracy theories, the inferiority of non-white races, the resurrection of Jesus, even that all states should be abolished. What we cannot do is act on the beliefs in a non-sanctioned way, that is: in anyway that could produce physical conflict. The state's job is to prevent such conflict, whether it takes the form of a bar fight or insurrection. The conflicts allowed are those banal, sorry "heated," conversations

where nothing is at stake. Any attempt to resolve one's own conflict is "vigilanteism" that the state must stop, as in the too often celebrated case of the Black Panther Party or the gangs of women who beat up abusers. Sometimes the state merely confines conflict to one area, as is demonstrated by the cops who don't go into the ghettos but instead patrol its borders to make sure it doesn't spread.

So we have the state which, in the name of safety and comfort, creates citizens who claim internal freedom with external submission. Or in other words, our mind is free but body constrained. Yet, despite what Descartes and other early modern metaphysicians might say, there is no real distinction between mind and body. Karl Marx writes in *The German Ideology* "consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process." Existence is what your body does. A person is what they do, primarily, not what they think about themselves.

Of course, if the state was the only problem it would be easy. We could just vote a libertarian into office who would minimize the police force, pull us out of foreign wars, whatever. We might even be able to get some good drugs. You know, the ones that you consume passively but can't be legalized because you get addicted which leads to conflict like theft. Yet, even if we did reduce the state, minimize it as much as possible, we'd still have capitalism to destroy. But why does capitalism need to be destroyed? Well, sure, there's our "\$6.50

plus tips, our rotting teeth, all our combined STDs," as the authors of the first *Politics* is not a Banana pointed out. There's wars fought for oil, the exploitation of workers in Asia, the starving in Africa, the melting polar ice caps, whatever. For me it is a little simpler: capitalism attempts to reduce all human experience to a monetary value and says that what cannot be reduced is valueless. Human life becomes the production and consumption of commodities. Or to put in another way: human life becomes boring. What is there to be passionate about? A new videogame, a sports team, designer clothes, a new book? It is hard to even become passionate about each other. As Claire Fontaine says in *Dear R*, "the fact is that they force us into apartments, into jobs, into clothes, into cars, and into desires that make us very difficult to love." I want to love the person behind the counter at the store, especially since he/she is pretty, but all we talk about is our awful jobs, the ~~price~~ price of gasoline, movies we have both seen, and our shared taste in music. I'm sure she/he has things inside that want to get out, like I do, but we don't have a language to express it in. We get drunk and fuck instead, or go to church and learn that we weren't actually made for this world.

Like I said: boring.

Perhaps you are saying something similar to what Nietzsche has Zarathustra say, "free from what? As if that mattered to Zarathustra! But your eyes should tell me brightly: free for what?"

To which I can only vaguely respond: free for passionate lives of great experimentation and play. Perhaps man has no essence, only existence, and if that is the case we have infinite possibilities. Let us create and realize them, not produce images and "lifestyles" within the capitalist framework. The question for me becomes: what structures, social relations, environments, give us power and pleasure? What mythologies give health? A friend once told me that she wants to build a labyrinth in the desert out of antique doors. In "Formulary for a New Urbanism" Ivan Chatcheglov writes of a city with districts that "correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life." I personally dream, sometimes literally, of swings suspended from highway overpasses, houses made of transparent materials and set afloat on the ocean, buildings constructed in the shapes of triangles or circles, sacred places besides churches, grills for picnics on street corners, domesticated herds of giraffes, graffiti everywhere ranging from "i fucked your mama in the butt" to Euclidean geometry, alternatives to the prison industrial complex, parachuting from sky scrapers, explorations of magnetism on animal behavior, community bread baking ovens. And sure, maybe it is ridiculous. And sure there will be conflict and we will have to still eat, have water, poop somewhere. People will still get cancer, there will be babies to care for. But I'm

Sure we can figure it out. It will likely be messy if capitalism falls, we have no way of knowing what is beyond it. "Every proposed conjecture is a lie," Dominique Misèin writes in *At the Center of the Volcano*, "Certainly, there is freedom, whatever that may be. Once conquered, it is up to us to know how to maintain it and be able to take pleasure in it. It is up to us, as well, if we so choose, to renounce it, but not before we have tried it."

Of course, I have no real idea of how to get there. My personal form of struggle is rather simple and mundane. I avoid economic relations as much as possible, preferring to use friendship, where money does not exchange hands and nothing is owed, as a model for how I interact with others. I write letters, give gifts, ask questions and actually listen to the answers. And if someone fucks with my friend I fight, if they ask me to. Liam Sionnach writes in the *Second Politics* is not a Banana; "no one asks anything more than the gift of gestures: a letter, a book, a tasty treat, some money, some cigarettes, a back hand, a hair-pull, some piss, some blood, a stupid website, an international organ of social war, an international practice of social war, a human strike, another human strike."

*Gestures? Is that all you advocate? one asks.

But ~~with~~ with that question you show that you missed the point. All I advocate is that there be a certain honesty between us. Both in speech and in the relation between our bodies and what is inside them.

with love,
patrokolos

Dear _____,

Yesterday I picked up a copy of Roberto Bolaño's Last Evenings on Earth and read it late into the night. When finally I turned out the light I realized my water glass was empty. This would not bother many, but a lack of easy access to water can be problematic for me. I was tired and decided to attempt sleep without it. A mere hour of sleep passed before I woke with a terribly dry mouth. I rose and got some, but in doing so I ruined my chances. I was unable to sleep again. After a few hours of feeble attempts I went to the kitchen, put on a pot of coffee, and awaited the dawn with books and a little writing. This is the form my insomnia takes. When the sun finally rose I showered and fixed myself breakfast. After that I should have left the house, and part of me wanted to, but instead I diverted myself until the postman came at eleven. This is a regular and distasteful habit of mine, waiting at the house each morning to see if a letter from you will come. This morning, like most, brought nothing. After that discovery I went back to bed, but only slept for twenty minutes or so. I awoke remembering only one scene from my dream. It was of a large cat, possibly a mountain lion, pacing about. I studied the ceiling for a few minutes, trying to see if the rest of the dream would come and trying to figure out something to do with the rest of my day. Eventually I dressed and left the house.

I went to the zoo.

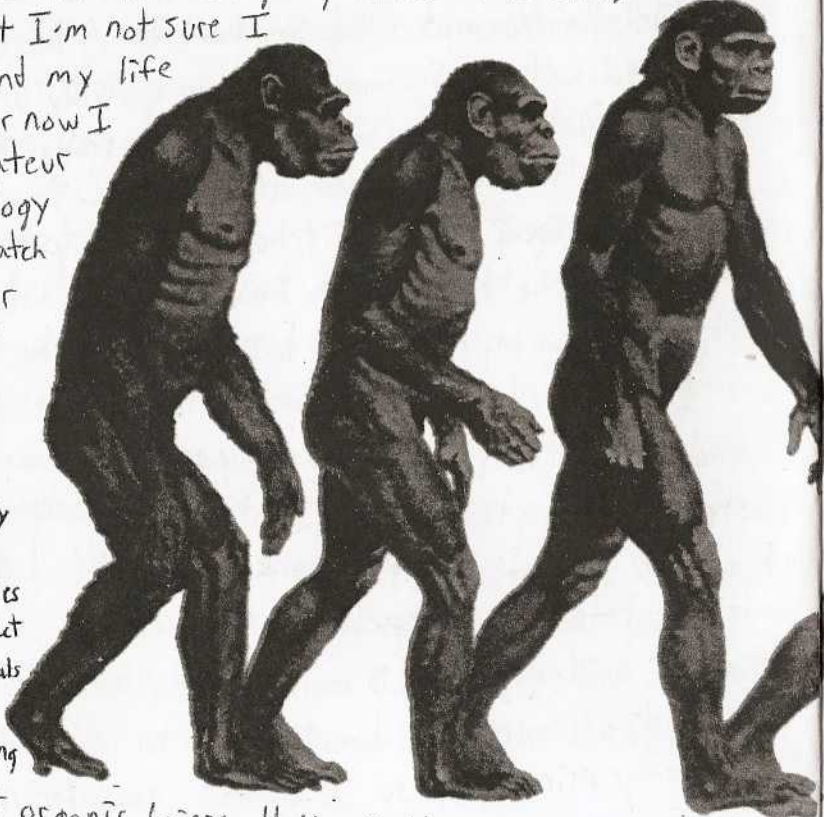


Communism is not a movement, or a question of organization; it is only a vague description of a possible way of life for humankind, Communism comes after revolution, and revolution will not be made by any of us. Our inevitable and necessary failure as pro-revolutionaries is written on this wall, just as is our failure, and our parents' failure, to live fully as human beings. Against the missionary and dishonest optimism of pro-revolutionaries we posit a basic nihilism.

--from Nihilist Communism by Monsieur Dupont

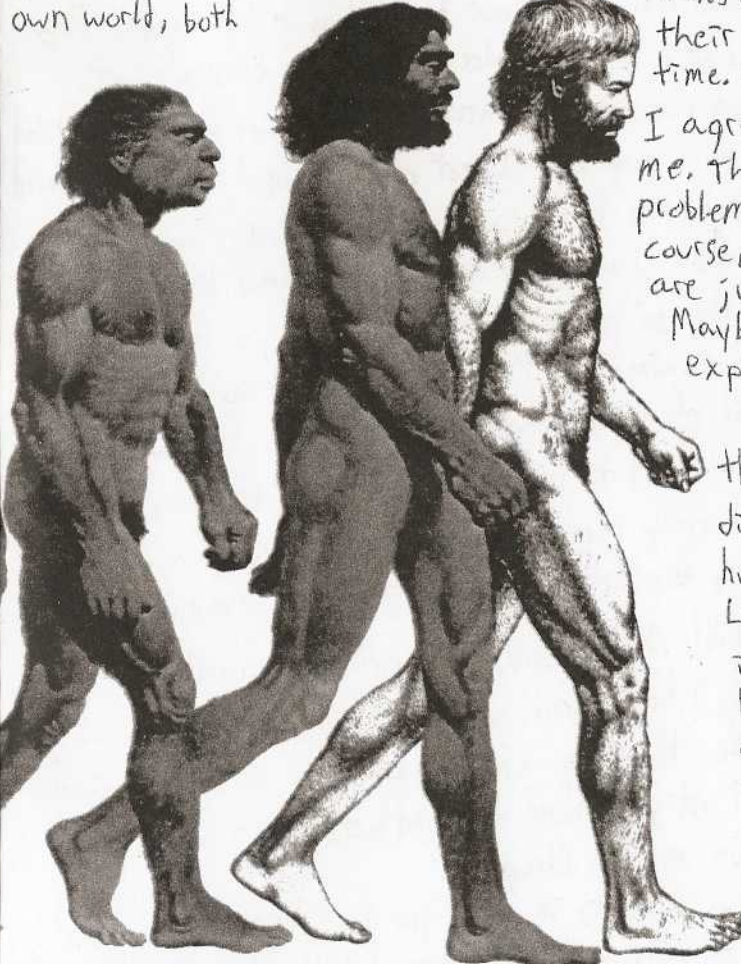
It would not be a complete lie to say I went to figure out my dream, but I also went to see the animals. I wanted to see the elephants eat, to watch their mouths that have always seemed creepy to me, and see the giraffes walk and the monkeys groom each other with tenderness right before throwing poop, and the crocodile pretend it is harmless and lazy. Sometimes I think about going to school to study animal behavior, but I'm not sure I

want to spend my life that way. For now I play the amateur and read biology books and watch animals, either in person or on video. I want to know how animals move, specifically whether they are like machines that merely react to external signals and stimulus, or if there is something



different about organic beings. Hobbes, in the opening sections of Leviathan, attempts to prove that motion comes from from external objects. If that is true then animals are just complicated machines, but I am not convinced. I am more interested in the ideas of biologists like Jakob Von ~~Vexküll~~ Vexküll who wrote in A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men, "we who still

hold that our sense organs serve our perceptions, and our motor organs our actions, see in animals as well not only the mechanical structure, but also the operator, who is built into their organs, as we are into our bodies." Basically, since humans have an "I" or something that mitigates perception and action, animals probably do too. Von Vexküll



owns his own world, both thinks animals have their their own space and time. I don't know if I agree, but it intrigues me. The whole animal problem, that is, of course, maybe humans are just machines. Maybe everything can be explained through physics. I also often think about the differences between humans and animals. Lots of people say it is language; we have it and animals only utter out sounds. I think the main difference is that we know we will die. Heidegger connects the two. In On the Way to Language he points to "the essential relation between language and death" but I don't understand it. Giorgio Agamben has a book about language and death as well, but I never feel like I understand anything he talks about.

Anyway, after several hours I had seen all the animals at the zoo besides the bison. I was saving

them for last. Bison are special for me because it was by working with the Buffalo Field Campaign that I was radicalized and became who I am, in part. That winter I went out each day and stayed close to the bison that had left Yellowstone Park, ready in case the Department of Livestock came out to harass or kill them. Days the DOL didn't come were wonderful because then we just followed the bison around and watched them. They were so beautiful and scary. Once this guy and I got charged by two of them and we had to climb trees to escape death. That's when I learned that nature doesn't care about human beings. So I wanted to see the bison but it turned out you had to take this stupid zoo-train to get to them. The train cost extra and it was full of screaming kids. So instead I sat down by the birds and tried to remember going to the zoo as a kid but I could only remember going once, when my father took me and my brother, and all I could remember was seeing a mandrill. You know, the primate with the blue and red face? That's all I could remember. I sat there for a while, thinking about mandrills and bison and then I thought of you and how that winter with the buffalo you took me to Oregon.

Here is how it went, in case you don't remember. I had heard you were driving with a group of ladies to a women and trans only forest defense camp outside of Eugene. I went up to you all nervous because you intimidated me (you always seemed so confident, so strong) and I asked if I could get a ride to Portland with you. When you said there wasn't room I almost cried but then you asked why I needed a ride and I told you I wanted to see my dad. I told you I'd only seen him once in twelve

years and you smiled and said you would make room for me. That trip is one of the most important things that ever happened to me. And not just seeing my dad. I don't like to tell people about that part because it is sad and sometimes I feel guilty about it. I broke my dad's heart on that trip. And yeah, he did terrible things to me and my mom and my brother. And yeah, he broke my heart and almost my entire soul first. But I did break his heart. Sometimes I'm not sure I can live with myself because of it. And even though I asked him never to contact me again, even though I needed that, I still miss my dad. I'm afraid he will die before I talk to him again. And I chose that possibility, and still do. But I miss my dad. I never thought I'd ever write that, or say it aloud. It's true though. I've seen him once since that trip, at my cousin's wedding two years ago, but we only exchanged a few superficial sentences. I was too scared. I saw a terrible sadness in him and I knew it was in me too and I didn't want it to start bleeding out again.

There are other stories from that trip that I tell people still. Like how you took me on my first dumpster diving expedition and you pulled out nine bottles of wine from the Trader Joe's one and how K. just pissed in the street behind cars because she was that bad ass, how you and I went into the K-mart arm in arm, pretending to be a nice young heterosexual couple so we could steal things but we ended up paying for everything anyway. And how we wanted to make a soufflé but didn't have cream or milk so we used wine instead and it worked but was purple. There are other things I remember but don't tell people. Like how all four of us slept in the same bed and when we woke up I was holding you real tight against me and I was worried you would be mad or think I wanted to have sex with you but instead you told me I was nice to sleep next to. Or how the night

before I was supposed to go to my dad's I got drunk and started saying "Can we wait one more day? please?" "I can't do it right now" and you said of course. How when the day finally came you all came to his house with me to be sure I was okay. Or how you told me you wished pubic hair was barbed wire so no one could rape you but you could shave it off if you liked someone. You taught me what rape and assault and consent really were, what it meant to be a survivor and an ally.

And then after that trip, when we got back, you decided to leave Montana and we got into that stupid fight the day before you were to leave. That night I was drinking, and I thought you were going to be to, but you stayed in the cabin and I couldn't go inside because you couldn't be drunk in there. I thought maybe you'd sleep in your van so I opened the back but it was packed full of your stuff, so I slept sitting and shivering in the front seat. When you opened the door in the morning I said "I'm sorry, I'm sorry" and you stroked my tangled hair and said "shh, shh, it's okay. go back to sleep." But I couldn't. I had something inside me that could never be said in words, something that if I started trying to say I would have said all my life and still not been finished. When we hugged goodbye an hour later I told you I loved you. I hadn't said that to anyone since I was a little kid, not even to my mom. You told me you loved me too. I thought until that moment that love meant feeling powerless before someone, but loving you made me feel powerful.

It wasn't till after I left a week later that I realized I didn't write down your contact information, and didn't remember what it was. To this day we haven't spoken. Sometimes I meet people who know you. I even met that boy who hurt you. Once a girl gave me your number, but I didn't have the nerve to call you. It had been years and I did not know what I'd say. When we met I was just a sad

lonely boy and you, you were something else. I was afraid you wouldn't remember me. One night I made myself call the number. It was disconnected. Once I told you that maybe I'd write a book about my dad, about everything that happened when I was a kid and when I visited him ~~at his house~~. You said you'd like to read it. Well I don't think I will ever write it. I can only tell pieces of the story. When I try to tell the whole thing I get all confused and ashamed and scared. But maybe this will somehow find you and you will read it.

After thinking about all this I went back to the large cats, but none of them looked like the one in my dream. So I went home and wrote this letter and read Last Evenings on Earth until I finally finished it, late into the night.

wherever you are
take care and be good,

pattokolos

"I listened patiently and then I told him that life was long and there were many women in the world. That was where we had our first important difference of opinion. He said no, that for him there weren't lots, and then he quoted a poem that I begged him to write down on a page in my order pad so I could learn it by heart. The poem was by some French guy. It said more or less that the flesh was sad and that he, the poet who was writing the poem, had already read all the books...



... as we walked I asked him, as if I had accepted his argument, what a person was supposed to do after reading everything and sleeping with everyone, according to the French poet, of course, and he said travel, go away."

(From *The Savage Detectives* by Roberto Bolaño)

(Six)

Dear _____,

You don't write me very often, but I don't mind. I know you are probably busy. Of course, I don't know exactly what you are busy with. That's one of the difficulties with not living around someone, not seeing them often. You still carry inside you an image of the person, but you aren't able to picture them day to day. Maybe you live with someone else now, maybe you're in school studying hard, maybe you're drinking a lot, maybe your job at the laboratory takes up all your time. Maybe you're falling in love with someone else. Whatever it is, it doesn't mean much to me. I'll keep writing you letters. And if I don't know your address I'll still write them and save them for when I learn it. I still love you and I can't change that.

My friend tells me that he's afraid that loving someone who doesn't love you or who can't be with you is a feminine trait. Like the story about a woman waiting at a lighthouse for her sailor to return. I'm not bothered by that though. I don't want to try and love anyone else. Not anymore at least. And my love doesn't ask for anything.

Or if it does, it asks only one thing. Do not die. You see, since you are alive I can still hope to see you again, but if you die I don't

think I will have that hope. I don't know what happens after death, but even if there's a heaven and you and I somehow end up there and get all our desires fulfilled, even then I might not get to see you. Not really, at least. Think about it. If my desire is to be with you then I will be with you in heaven. But if your desire is to be with someone else or for something else entirely, then you will get that. But then who will be the you that I am with? Not the you I know and want. My love for you doesn't mean I want your touch or to hear your voice, though I do want those things too sometimes. My love for you means that I want your touch and smell and voice, but only if you want those things too. That's why I never understood those who coerce someone to have sex with them. That's what animals do. Human beings, on the other hand, want not just the body but the desire, or love, of the other. I hope that makes sense; I know it might seem convoluted. Just don't die. ~~If you do I will have to take revenge on the world.~~

If we both live, one day we will see each other again. I don't have faith in much. For instance, I never say It will be okay. I'll say You will be okay, because a human being can endure anything, nothing is unbearable, but I won't say It will be okay. I don't know that it will, and I don't want to be a liar. I won't even say it to the kids I work with. The truth is, I don't think it will be okay. That's just not my experience. But I do have faith that we will see each other again.

It might not be for a long time. I know this world has a way of continuing when you want it to stop, that there is no resting place. I used to think it was made of stone, that I could carve out a shelter. But I can't, it all flows. I hope we will see each other soon, while we are young, but maybe we won't see each other again until I am old.



I'll be sitting on my porch watching the sunset over a field and then I'll see a figure emerge from the lengthening shadows and it will be you, walking towards me. When we meet we will both be smiling so much our faces will begin to hurt but we won't care. I'll stand to greet you and we will look at each other, hesitant, not knowing how to approach one another. Then we'll embrace and I'll take your hand and lead you inside. I'll sit you at a

chair in the kitchen and disappear for a minute only to return with a box full of letters addressed to you. I'll sit beside you and say I never stopped writing them. I'll tell you I missed you. I'll tell you I love you and I'm sorry I didn't say it enough before. And maybe you will cry. Maybe you will say that you are sorry. Sorry for not loving me, or sorry that you still don't love me, or sorry that our love wasn't enough, or sorry that our love still isn't enough. And I'll say shh. I'll say There's nothing to be sorry about. You never owed me anything, I never needed a promise from you. You are not, and never were, obligated. And I'll tell you I don't regret anything and that will be true. With a soft smile I'll say I have lived a pleasant life, a happy life even. And I will take your hand in mine. By this time my skin will be as thin and fragile as the wing of a butterfly, and I will be amazed that it is able to contain my happiness now that you have come. I will rise and make some tea, pouring it slowly into two mason jars and I will add to it a little whiskey. And we will go back out to the porch and tell each other about the lives we have led. And maybe you will leave again in the morning, maybe in the night one of us will fall asleep and not wake again. But oh, how lovely it will be.

Please do come,
patrokolos



Contact:

patrokolos
~~po box 522006~~ ← now I live in Philadelphia
~~salt lake city, utah 84125~~
patrokolos@riseup.net
~~patrokolos@gmail.com~~
~~http://patrokolos.blogspot.com~~

"The scholar sits down to write, and all his years of meditation do not furnish him with one good thought or happy expression; but it is necessary to write a letter to a friend, and, forthwith, troops of gentle thoughts invest themselves, on every hand, with chosen words."



from
Ralph Waldo
Emerson's
essay on
friendship

(I quote
books a lot.
But you know that
already.)

