

MYTHMAKERS & LAWBREAKERS

anarchist writers on fiction

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—Octavio Buenaventura

part nine

OCTAVIO BUENAVENTURA

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Margaret Killjoy

This zine is an excerpt from the book *Mythmakers & Lawbreakers*, published in 2009 by AK Press. The book consists of a series of interviews with various anarchist fiction writers, as well as extensive appendices with biographies and reading lists of anarchist writers. We are making the work available in zine format, in the spirit of creative commons, but are of course indebted to AK Press for publishing the book in the first place.

The rest of the book can be downloaded in zine form from us at www.tangledwilderness.org or bought from AK Press at www.akpress.org

Mythmakers and Lawbreakers: Anarchist Writers on Fiction
Edited by Margaret Killjoy, 2009

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OCTAVIO BUENAVENTURA

Now here is an author shrouded from public view. Originally published by The International Anarchist Conspiracy, Octavio Buenaventura is the author of the genuinely amazing occult novella Ever & Anon. The International Anarchist Conspiracy is itself a pseudo-fictional entity, a propaganda arm that publishes communiqués and theory that are a sort of magical realism superimposed onto reality. No one can tell if they're joking.

I let some travelers from Washington know that I was looking for Octavio. "Never heard of him," they told me, "but we'll ask around." Some weeks later, an email. Not from Octavio, but from the Ministry of Secrets of the International Anarchist Conspiracy. As requested, I forwarded questions along.

He told me about the power of myth and fiction, about better uses for words than books.

Margaret: *I'll start with a nice, broad question. Why do you write fiction?*

Octavio: I will answer all of these questions badly.

I write fiction because I have nothing to do with my spare time. When I fall into the repetitiveness of my supposedly radical lifestyle, spinning fantasies is

Anarchism and magic forged a connection long before the International Anarchist Conspiracy sensationalized that connection and before there was a Hakim Bey or a Starhawk. A friend once said that perhaps it was because of the letter A. I believe anarchism, which does not seek to have any form of hierarchy, goes against the beliefs of many people interested in magic. Many people interested in magic do not wish to live in a world without the amplifiers of civilization. Some of them are currently filling this civilization's many leadership roles. There are many contradictions with anarchism and magic as it has been known.

The two belief systems, however, annihilate one another in a grand synthesis, the results of which can already be seen if one knows what to look for. Anarchism-the-mother and Magic-the-father create the future. Magic frees the mind from slavery and anarchism frees the body from slavery. Some people call magic the reconciling of opposites. Anarchism is the same thing. It is bringing those who once preyed on each other together for the purpose of living in balance.

Some magicians are not interested in balance, however. These perverted, power-addicted magicians have created their own destruction through their sickening practices. Whether they are aware of this or not is irrelevant. A world without their concentration camps and mushroom clouds is approaching. It has been approaching since Emma Goldman read Nietzsche, since the tribes of Germania fought the Romans, since Greece began to burn with rage.

On a side note, the new sell-all phrase for Macy's is: "The magic of Macy's."

Nestor Mahkno was more powerful than any fat Magus in England. Emma Goldman had more fire in her body than all of the Queens of England put together. They received their power from the places they fought for and the people they loved. Queen Elizabeth was an intoxicated faerie turning everything beautiful and free into gold for her rings. There were free women in the Ukraine who could turn Elizabeth inside out, women who will never be written about or remembered. Anarchists are practitioners with no knowledge of any existing craft. Anarchists invent their own practice, their own craft. And they are all the better for it. **(A)**

originally meant to be a present to a loved one, which it still is.

In the process of describing the journey of the three artists, I inadvertently began writing about the entire development of Western culture and how it influenced them. This led back to the myths and gods of Greece and Babylon. The largest fictions, the myths and the gods, do not die quickly. The entire novella describes the process of these fictions being understood for what they are: _____ [Octavio left these blanks intentionally in his letters to me]. The characters plunge into the abyss and find themselves surrounded by fire when they emerge from it. All myths burn at the end of *Ever & Anon*. Their power returns to its source: _____. The fictions all grow small again.

Here is a partial list of the myths and gods and fictions that burn at the end of the book: rationality, reason, domestication, slavery, Man, Woman, the Mono, the One, the future, representation, and fascism. Power does not burn. Power is only a word expressing one thing: magic. Another word for magic is: _____. Magic without the One, or God, is the magic of the future described in *Ever & Anon*. Magic without a center, a magic with practices and rituals that change each day. Magic no book can contain, no matter how red and white and black its pages might be. Each of the three characters attempt to channel their gifts into fixed forms and find those forms incapable of holding _____. Their efforts to do so drive them mad.

The post-revolutionary setting was necessary, because this sort of implosion which the protagonists feel can only occur when the entire system has crashed and the fictions of the twisted masters no longer influence anyone. My concern was not the details of the future society but the problem I have described above. A poet should not attempt to meddle in affairs of which they are ignorant.

Margaret: *In your piece and in the non-fiction that your publishers put out, myth and magic are heavily interlaced into anarchist struggle. What can you tell me about that? How do they relate?*

Octavio: That's an interesting question. I'll talk about the International Anarchist Conspiracy first.

They seem to be interested in writing children's stories. Or at least that's what I think. They use the word "magic" to describe things which are mostly physical and visibly direct in nature. Once they called it physically altering one's surrounding. I call that acting, they call it magic. As far as some people are concerned, it's a complete joke. However, I am under the suspicion that something is being withheld from view by the Ministry. They are not telling the full truth. But they are also not lying about the correlations they are drawing between certain things. I don't know the cipher. Maybe there isn't one, but I think they are trying to render all methods of fixed, thought-organization systems obsolete. For all of their secrecy, they seem to really hate it.

the only way I can feel content with a life spent largely in stasis. I value my fantasies, but they serve largely as a complex rationalization of my inability to act. They are strange side-effects of my impatience for a world in which our collective fantasies are our own lives. A world that words cannot create but merely represent.

Fiction is everywhere. The most powerful creators of fiction are the governments and corporations of the world. Their fictions are meant to enslave massive amounts of people, binding them to a product, a ministry, a people, a symbol, a country. These fictions flow through our minds constantly. The fact that we are numb to these saturation techniques is proof of this. We are all familiar with the slow, consistent narratives that are spun through advertising and propaganda.

But what awful fictions they are. They are revolting. They make your mind sick. You begin to emulate zombies when you emulate their stories, when you believe in their myths, when you swim within their narrative of chains. They make people obese and turn them into cybernetic killers. They strip away people's souls and turn them into puppets of ecstatic marketers and grinning counter-intelligence operatives. These fictions are powerful in their scope, not in their effect.

The fictions of those who have escaped their narrative are far more resilient and alive. I will not list which fictions these are. If you are reading this obscure book, there are fictions which have stayed with you forever, fictions that keep you connected to a time or a place or people. The fiction created together by a community of free people is a fiction that is not susceptible to fire.

In my impatience and inability to act, I choose to write my own fictions and give them to people.

Margaret: *So, part of what you're saying, perhaps, is that we can tell other stories, other fictions and myths, to counter the ones that mainstream culture insists upon?*

Octavio: Yes, we can. But they will still only be our stories. If they are understood as such (stories, fiction, fantasies), they can do no damage. I think a story which becomes a law is a nightmare, a deranged fantasy. These nightmares, like the one we are currently living in, become genocidal and start to metastasize. These nightmares cannot tolerate the existence of other stories.

And so the creation of stories is absolutely essential to resisting the nightmarish monoculture. Without them, we slip back into their celluloid dreamland. Sometimes, when we try to think of new stories, we have nothing to draw upon aside from what we have learned from decades of their media saturation. Their books, their movies, their news, their images, their lies. Sometimes, we weave the nightmare without realizing it. It is all we have known. Escape is difficult.

A total escape leads to a destruction of all representation. This is something people cannot imagine. How does one abandon all they have learned? That is the question. We merry artists are stuck in this wasteland. This desolate expanse of wreckage and repetition. These are questions we all have to answer.

Some idiots have made their art subservient to the Party. Others have made their art subservient to the coin. If we make our art subservient to no one, who does it serve? Why are we not writing books that must be burnt by those in power? Why are fascists not attacking our galleries? When will we begin to use our gifts to fight? [Antonin] Artaud called it all pig shit. It is all pig shit unless it is not all pig shit. And it all seems like pig shit right now.

Our era is the era of juxtaposition. We can see a picture of a charred baby in Gaza while at the same time listen to a beautiful song our friend made. All atrocity, all genocide, all horror is given the same level of importance as a painting or a blog. All are seen as one giant, golden, glowing ball of pig shit. Everyone puts headphones in their ears and stretches their canvases and knows that burning white death is falling onto schools while they go to the bar or watch a movie. The horror is known and it is accepted because at least, at least, at least there is beauty, beauty, beauty.

Margaret: *What do you think that radical fiction writers, yourself and others, can do? How can we be useful? Do we need to be useful through our fiction, or are the ideas divorced from one another?*

Octavio: I would like to think that we can be useful. Perhaps we can be of some use right now. I pretend that my words can be of some use. I know that I have been deeply affected by other people's art and writing.

At this point in time, however, a lot of words have been written. There are an awful lot of them. I don't think we need any more words to know that we need to stop this nightmare around us. Words seem to only push our actions off into the future. But in the darkness they are very nice to have. Our words are burning veins of memory stretching away in every direction, carrying with them lessons from other times and places and people. These words can only keep us content for so long, though, before becoming a fetish. This culture creates fetishes out of everything.

One way for artists to be useful is to throw themselves through plate glass windows and write *fuck you* on the sides of buildings. Paint your misery on peoples' white picket fences and write pornography inside Christmas cards. Take none of your creations seriously. Because they are not serious things, they are toilet paper and fire starter and garbage. So stuff that garbage into a cop's mouth or into the machine's databases.

Refuse to speak their language. Learn to see without seeing.

Margaret: *One thing that I've found to be curious, for myself, is to be a creator of cultural artifacts, when at the same time I'm very influenced by immediatist, anti-art critiques. I like this idea of saying, "We make these things, and perhaps they're important, but you know what? What if they're not?"*

Octavio: If one person I love likes what create I am happy. My creations are important to me. If others find them important, I care very little.

These things we make have real importance within small circles. Outside of that circle, they get picked up and tossed around by the ebbs and flows of the ruler's broken machine, thus losing all of their power and becoming empty shells.

A dying child in Gaza has no care for my creations, nor should she.

Margaret: *Your novella, Ever & Anon, takes place in a post-revolutionary society. But unlike perhaps any other post-revolutionary fiction I've read, it isn't about the revolution or the post-revolutionary society, as much as it is about the characters, philosophy, and magic. I appreciated that. It felt honestly like fiction, and not propaganda...*

Octavio: Firstly, I would like to clarify that, from what I understand, the International Anarchist Conspiracy is attempting to mirror the structures of power it wishes to destroy. They are also making fools of themselves. In my opinion, this de-legitimizes anyone else who attempts to act in a similar manner. Because anyone else doing the same thing would look like either another fool or a fascist.

The IAC insisted on placing their logo on the back of my novella. I cared little and said, "Okay," knowing that what they were calling propaganda was not propaganda. I am relieved that you found fiction within its covers.

Ever & Anon was meant to be a portrait of a problem I have imagined. What will happen to the "unique ones," the fire bringers, the "black brothers," and the wild at heart in a post-revolutionary situation? Where do they go? These people I am describing are people who make waves and cause trouble, people who cannot help their destructive impulses and will dive straight into the sun. The entire novella was meant to shed light on this little conundrum.

The plot is simple. Three artists live in two houses in the snowy mountains above a town in a post-revolutionary setting. The artists are supported by the town below and regularly exchange their art for food and luxuries. One day, one of the characters finds that her painting has manifested itself in front of her eyes, without her will behind it. She does not know why five marbles have suddenly appeared in her wall and can find no explanation. This causes her to begin to question everything about art, reality, and reason. In the process, much chaos is wrought on the two houses in the mountains.

I should also add that the book started off as a short story with no direction,