

the 2015 BASTARD conference
berkeley anarchist students of theory and research & development

Utopias and other Science Fictions

April 26, 10 am - 5pm
UC Berkeley Campus

10:00

2060 Valley LSB

Hard Utopias, Soft Science Fiction (nick)

11:30

229 Dwinelle

The Forgotten Works: Those Left Out of Utopia, as Viewed
Through Richard Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar*

(artnoose)

215 Dwinelle

Nihilist Magick, Beyond the Veil of Truth

(hunter and dominique)

56 Barrows

Not Utopia: Critical Self-Theory in Practice (jason)

12:30

229 Dwinelle

DIY utopia: hope not required (leona)

215 Dwinelle

On Slavery and BDSM in the work of Samuel R. Delany

(cosmo)

56 Barrows

Don't be a Dickhead, But... (lew)

2:00

229 Dwinelle

Group Discussion Without Rules:

Pros and Cons of Utopian Speculation (andrew)

215 Dwinelle

Anarchy and the Agrarian Question (chloe)

56 Barrows

Experiments with Desire:

The Commodity versus Community (michael)

3:30

229 Dwinelle

Film as Subversion (glenn)

215 Dwinelle

The Other Black Hoodies:

Monasticism and Anarchist Utopias (phillip)

56 Barrows

Killing the Silver-Handed Prince:

Anarchists and the Fight Against the Good Guys (jacob)

**Group Discussion Without Rules:
Pros and Cons of Utopian Speculation**

An unstructured group discussion about the how speculation may lead to material change — and the ways in which it does not.

Premises to explore could include:

- What material effects have historically actually resulted from visions of an ideal life?
- How is anarchism intrinsically process-oriented rather than goal-oriented? What does this imply about the limits of utopian speculation?
- How do preconceptions of the future inhibit our ability to create the future we want to live in? (E.g. by inviting “end justifies the means” tendencies, authoritarianism, etc.)
- How do utopian goals or ideals affect lived experience in the present day, pre-utopia?
- How might speculation recuperate revolutionary energy, convincing us we’ve accomplished something when we have merely thought about it?
- How do different anarchist schools of thought address these ideas?
- How have these ideas been addressed in speculative fiction?

This discussion will not have any formal rules or process. However, a brief initial presentation will describe possible pitfalls of unstructured group discussion, as well as some thoughts of what an ideal discussion might look like. This will set the stage for the discussion itself to serve as an experiment in unstructured process towards a loosely-preconceived ideal.

The Forgotten Works: Those Left Out of Utopia, as Viewed Through Richard Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar*

What becomes of the individuals who can't exist in even the most irresistible and accommodating of utopias? What of the heart that can't be mended, or the memories that collect in great heaps like a garbage dump?

In 1968, Richard Brautigan published the novel *In Watermelon Sugar*, featuring a community loosely based on Bolinas communes of the day. An intentional living situation known as iDEATH in a post-collapse world with a multi-colored sun grapples with its own collective existence when a group of outcasts obsessed with the past returns to the site of the killing of the last tiger to stage a final dramatic performance for the main group. We will use this text to explore the theme of exclusion in utopian visions. There will be several selections read aloud.

Although we will be touching on broad subjects, please read the text, at least in part. It is very short, and the full text is available as a pdf here:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/200332918/Richard-Brautigan-In-Watermelon-Sugar#scribd>

Anarchy and the Agrarian Question

Petr Kropotkin is considered one of the greatest anarchist theorists of all time. Before and alongside the development of those theories he was a scientist who studied evolution, nature, and agriculture. Through Kropotkin's vision of how revolution could unfold and what to do after or how material conditions for survival will be met I will explore his proposals in *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*. This is to begin the conversation of a utopian proposal that fits our own times. Is there a possibility of communes that look like whole neighborhoods, cities, microclimates, the world? Or is it foolish to begin now to plan for the day after?

This study will be done with examples from Masanobu Fukuoka's *The One Straw Revolution* and M. Kat Anderson's study of native California in *Tending the Wild*.

COSMO

12:30

On Slavery and BDSM in the work of Samuel R. Delany

By taking a critical look at the utopias and dystopias in the worlds of Samuel R. Delany our eyes are opened to wacky and wild possibilities that challenge popular radical ideas about what a human life could look like. We will examine the origins, manifestations, and movement through the various types of modern slavery. We will use the work of Lewis Call (a noted critic of Delany) to examine the role of BDSM in subverting mechanisms of slavery, perversion as an attack on morality, and how we can change our relationships to our bodies.

GLENN

3:30

Film as Subversion

What makes a film subversive is determined by how well it challenges a narrative; what makes a film propaganda is reinforcing a narrative. *Videodrome* is subversive, *Avatar* is propaganda. ... *Videodrome* tries to force the viewer to consider the relation between his own mind and the electronic spectacle, *Avatar* simply celebrates a "Green/Indigenous" narrative. *Alien I* was also a subversive film. The real horror of the film was not the multi-mandibled, slathering lizard, it was discovering that the crew's bosses intentionally sent them to collect the alien and then serve as its meal for the journey home, forcing the viewer to reevaluate his relationship with his own employers.

There are a lot of other, less famous, subversive films that I hope to discuss... *Daisies*, *Repo Man*, *Punishment Park*. Positive propaganda films might include *Matewan*, *Salt of*

the Earth, Itty Bitty Titty Club, and *The East*.

Negative propaganda films include *Triumph of the Will*, *Birth of a Nation*, and *Battleship Potemkin*.

If possible, a series of short film clips will accompany the lecture.

HUNTER & DOMINIQUE

II:30

Nihilist Magick, Beyond the Veil of Truth

Science, religion, truth, and morality loom over our realm of consciousness, hexing our thoughts and the ways we perceive and interact with the world, others, and ourselves. Leap outside of faith and into the magickal void in favor of creative intuition and radical subjectivity. In a world defined by language and the symbolic and saturated with false claims to truth, it is up to the magician to cast the spells that form the apparent reality before them—or else fall prey to the hypnotic illusions laid forth by another! From a nihilistic perspective, and influenced by Austin Osman Spare's forms of chaos magick, the individual alone has the power to shape the creative nothing into a magickal nothing.

Featuring magickal trance-inducing synth drones and eerie tape loops performed live by Dominique.

Nothing is True. Everything is Permitted

—Austin Osman Spare

Nothing is forbidden, everything is permitted

—Renzo Novatore

JACOB

3:30

Killing the Silver-Handed Prince: Anarchists and the Fight Against the Good Guys

While anarchists find common ground with Leftists on the basis of the latter's opposition to oppression, uses of authority which are burdensome, cruel, or unjust and with anti-statists obviously on the basis of their mutual oppo-

sition to the state-form of governance, anarchists hypothetically commit themselves to go further in their total opposition to authority as such.

Join us for discussion as we step outside of states and away from the oppressed to explore together what it looks like as anarchists to oppose authority even, or perhaps especially, when that authority is beneficent.

JASON

II:30

Not Utopia: Critical Self-Theory in Practice

Between utopian aspirations and dystopian realities, the practice of critical self-theory is an integral part of both everyday resistance and self-creative insurrection.

Let's take a look at some of the most *practical* aspects of critical self-theory in relation to strategic and tactical acts of critique, subversion, and rebellion.

This workshop will consist of a handout and 5-minute presentation to launch a group discussion of experiences and possibilities.

LEONA

I2:30

DIY utopia: hope not required

The problem with utopias is that they are plans. Most anarchists understand that plans for situations we haven't been in are too limited (and/or short sighted) to actually work. But the good thing about plans is that if we commit to them IN OUR IMAGINATION, then we are encouraged to flesh out what we really think we want, what we think is possible: these can be good challenges to our daily practices. Science fiction gives us leeway to be as imaginative as possible, utopias encourage us to commit to how we really want to live.

Our circumstances grow increasingly constraining and constrained; this workshop is an exercise in imagination and personal practice.

We will be using *bolo'bolo* as a jumping off point (you need not have read the book) for imagining our own utopia, and there will be small group interactions, so bring a friend if you need to.

LEW

12:30

Don't be a Dickhead, But...

Philip K. Dick explored philosophical, sociological, political, and metaphysical themes in novels dominated by monopolistic corporations, authoritarian governments, and altered states of consciousness. The world is becoming more and more PHILDICKIAN (not a good thing). This talk will delve into metaphysics, madness, drugs, consumer fetishism...as explored in novels like *Ubik*, *The Simulacra*, *We Can Rebuild You*, etc.

MICHAEL

2:00

Experiments with Desire: The Commodity versus Community

Too many issues plague us, too many boundaries contain us. It is time we start taking more things into account if we are genuine in wanting to reach liberation and a sustainable planet (which must be one and the same). There are those who want an end to police brutality, but what about policed banality? Many want an end to war, but what about an end to the bore? Why abolish right to work laws when we can abolish both work and laws? In this presentation, we will be dealing with these issues and more as well as evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of resistance movements and rebellions such as Occupy, Ferguson, the revolutionary Kurds fighting in Kobane and others along with some hopes to try and reach that thing some may call Utopia.

NICK

10:00

Hard Utopias, Soft Science Fiction

Science fiction can be fruitfully if uncomfortably split between the hard and the soft—hard SF is supposedly scientifically rigorous and essentially right-wing and individualistic; soft SF is oriented toward the social and the collective. Utopia, the "no place/good place" has historically been the precinct of soft SF, but what would a hard SF utopia look like? Can utopia become a political project, and not simply a science fictional project?

PHILLIP

3:30

The Other Black Hoodies: Monasticism and Anarchist Utopias

Both cowed and cowl'd under a regimented life of strict obedience, Christian monks and nuns seem the least likely to inspire anarchist utopias. Yet, in their historical and contemporary forms, monasteries offer useful examples and cautionary tales for those striving to build anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical communities. For this presentation I draw from observations made in various Christian monasteries in N California over the last four months. I also compare the practices and principles in two texts: *The Rules of Saint Benedict* (540) and *bolo'bolo* (1983). I focus on tensions found in both anarchic and monastic practices: individualism versus collectivism (or solitude versus community, for the monks); organizing versus "lifestyleism" (or social justice versus contemplation/prayer); affinity and critique (obedience and conscience); social war and individual liberation (justice and forgiveness). Participants with experience in monastic communities of any sort – Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, etc – are particularly encouraged to share their insights. For those who have never experienced monasticism, there will be a few activities to replicate some of the embodied sensations of monastic life; so; this is a trigger alert: there will be singing, chanting, and drinking. And if you could, please wear a hoodie.

NOTES

questionnaire

how did you find out about the conference?

favorite workshop?
why?

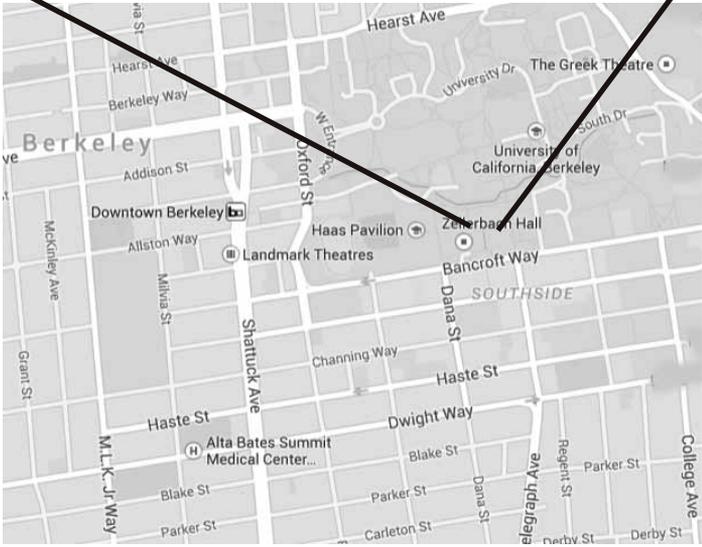
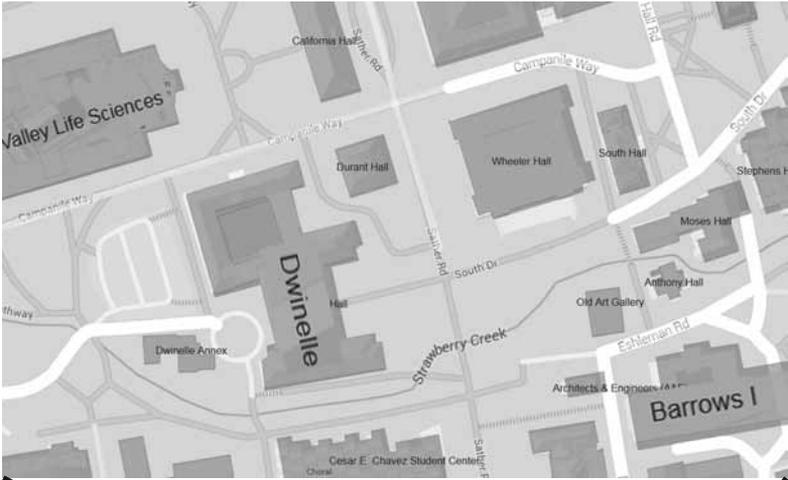
favorite quotation?

describe the best outfit you saw—

worst workshop?
why?

describe the worst outfit—

idea for future theme?



The 2015 BASTARD conference is pleased to have Nick Mamatas as our keynote speaker. (Hard Utopias, Soft Science Fiction, 10 a.m.) Learn more about Nick at his website <http://www.nick-mamatas.com/> or from his twitter (<https://twitter.com/NMamatas>)

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free (donation requested)
no commerce