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ARTIFACT OF HOPE

CARLA HARRYMAN

FROM *LETTERS NOT ABOUT HOPE*

FOR RACHEL LEVITSKY

Ordinance Series

Chicago: Kenning Editions, 2017

“There is in young people and in erotic personalities throughout their lives a kind of intransitive mental feeling of being-in-love, which its objects enter retrospectively... This temperament can extend far beyond the mere state of mind... the more sensation contents and imaginative contents are added to this, the more clearly these intransitive mental processes will also become related to objects and transitive: just as vague craving passes over into wishful contents by imagining its something, so the emotional world is now all the more governed by love of something, hope for something, pleasure in something”

—Ernst Bloch

DAYDREAM X

A game of hope

The concrete of hope goes to and will be at school. Then there is a change and the concrete utopia breaks up. Does it vanish? Does it make way for something new? Does the dust left from the crumbling of hope light on a thought, infiltrate a desire? Does the desire make a play? (Is it going to be for pay?)

Its expression is arrested, falls flat. Violence is on the horizon and here we are on it. The red bud too. The red buds curl up the branches, hugging them tightly, fur-like. Then one day, leaves appear on the tips where the buds have already dropped. There is an instant of looseness, contrasting textures, and soon all the tight red flowers will drop. The tree fights for space. Wild weather can make it break apart, but it adapts more easily than most. The budding image is full of potential and indeterminate. My not looking or looking beyond the energy gathering in it. When the “darkness of the just lived moment” that Bloch seeks to penetrate by our capacity to “look far into a distance” is assigned a distance limit, such as the date 2020, potential is a new and strange thing. What do I know of the redbud when I can't imagine the date of what's beyond it?

A latency, the latency

Dear R,

I had been looking for a quotation that would explain the missing. larks
the lost congeries of what. I am conveying to you.
I don't mean that what is absent would be. explained, no.
no, only that a pattern would be observable,
its fragments arrayed. the pattern itself
would be enough. to lace a lack of lark
what isn't there. as if it were
lacey.

DOCUMENT

A.

“Bloch, caught in his gender-blind spot, may be quick to dismiss feminist activism ... But the history of feminism might more appropriately be read as compelling evidence of the tenacious hope that the “badly existing” is not the only possible world... It is this very hope that relates feminist and gender theory to the central category of Bloch’s thought. *The Principle of Hope* demonstrates that expressions of hope, while they are unthinkable apart from the prevailing social reality and bound by the constraint of this reality, testify to a continued resistance to, and transgression of, these constraints.”¹

—Caitríona Ní Dhúill

R—

What I mean is—*the badly existing* from which
expressions of hope
appear
is in an accelerated mode
that causes an out-of-synch
in which the leavings of our hope seem
to be sinking below the horizon
though that nature metaphor may be up to no good
in my head

DAYDREAM 1

The child is awakened to beauty through her mother, while the father's aura is that of a magician. That's the encapsulation of a sequence of memories elevated to abstraction, symbol, and summary. Back in memory she desired skills—to drive her father's car, an army green Hudson, and to know the name of every bone in the human skeleton. Simultaneously beauty surrounds her and there is nothing to possess. When things go wrong, she runs away, forgetting beauty, fascination, adoration. But, truly, she wishes to run away for the sheer pleasure in it rather than a concocted cause: call this running away for its own sake, that is running away for the power in it and to know the presence of its power. Running away drives a desire to run for no reason. To run across asphalt and grass, up and down chain link fences, through road mud, on athletic fields and after a horse. There are no castles in the air and they are not necessary. While the photographs in National Geographic are of no interest whatsoever. The glossy exotic faces and bodies on its pages belong to maligned subjects some constrained employee was paid to capture in images. She does not imagine a tour of the jungle nor desire a ride on a jeep. These experiences could never compete with running away or with a waning memory of a mother's beauty. If a photographer got near either of them she would laugh right at the camera. *The castle in the air* sheds its frequencies.

Once upon a time, neither the commodity nor the contemporary present forced the sentence to adapt to their requirements. It would run away at will, while blobs ever-in-motion under a paternal microscope offered magical explanations to the life secrets on her mother's face.

Dear R,

This mélange is directed first to you: the paper I wrote after my bringing *The Principle of Hope* to The Public School that incorporated work done at your school two years later, the letters to your students I wrote to introduce to them Bloch's *Hope* or rather to introduce myself as an artist importing into our meetings the work of Ernst Bloch, and there are the daydreams I wrote after Bloch's, which I had intended less as "works" than as "demonstrations" to encourage collective experiment with the daydream as genre. My first example included an early memory of my mother. Then arrived the daydreams I didn't stop writing...well after class was over, as our national policings-policy climate got meaner and sicker. These bludgeon the wistfulness of the earlier ones. Written as they are under the sign of goon or Nobodaddy. Like this:

DAYDREAM 8

Knight of the long knives

Or dirty grandpa who can't keep his mouth shut

A fist rises from proverbial pockets

And two Ooofs fall out of the media bus "like Gerald Ford"

one fawning on the rotten and glaring wishes for revenge
of the other. God,

help us when they "move in on the bitch."

It is no guarantee after the election that the fist

will be faithful to the Ooof, itself

inconstant as a furniture store in Palm Beach.

The Ooof of the *it, she, I* vocab (furnishings) knows
a zero or two inside take-all-or-nothing futures,

their surrogate equipment branded dirty grandpa,

which is itself identical to the Ooof itself, with one difference:

the dirty grandpa is a familiar cliché and the Ooof—
the grammatical rubbish of riches and violence rotting within.

Its poison nourished by tic tacs
and media outlets has nowhere near been fully excreted.

Will their fists devices pocket their devices fists
“when the dirty grandpa who can’t keep his mouth shut”

is no longer provided a free night on the town
by those at the network’s top?

October 2016

Years before the current manifestation of proto-fascism, I named this endeavor “How to Read the Principle of Hope.” It was a project of time, people, places, and of abbreviated eventfulness that gave itself to certain practical accommodations in an open-ended fashion: it also struggled with the question of the space and time required for its experiment and the question of the value of the subjective thought-space of hope as impetus for collective reflection and activation. I had given it the “how to” title as a playful designation of shared activity: a collective reading and discussion practice that I had imagined branching out into a practice and study of pedagogy beyond the initial plan. Although it was predicated on interims, I could not anticipate the events that would lead to the discontinuities that gave it the odd form it has become: as document and memory text. Or as fractal of “the ending of occupy was traumatic.” This was a phrase from our first class Sarah Riggs recorded in handwriting for a drawing-text published with Duration Press, which, I note, leads off with your “all work is small.”²

So easily do the small, concrete utopias slip into hope’s privatizations, its atomizations within individual consciousness or within collective practices that become unsustainable. I am not referring to the threadbare rhetorics of hope in the dominant political sphere.

And what about hope's unacknowledged dimensions within politicized spaces of collective mourning such as a speaker's insistence on "bearing down on hope" at a gathering for Alton Sterling? Its unacknowledged insistence signaled by hijab born by choice in spheres of hate? And the untold experiments, whether activations or thought pieces, that make it out of the laboratory one person at a time? The person may be the contradiction of hope, "holding a piece of plank before his face"—to cite another of Sarah Rigg's text-drawings, this one of Reznikoff's words. Hope may be as indiscernable as one's ability to see one's own face absent a reflective surface, although it can be observed in what is made of it. And the place of hope may sometimes necessitate a form that cannot be elucidated in or illuminated through the public/private binary.

Yours, C

April 2017

*In which the already more contoured expression and form is prepared and concocted*³

*The epistolary is a slow medium, but one that doesn't require I stay on topic*⁴

Greetings Writers,

I am writing to you from Detroit and environs. My life requires that I move around in a circuit of more and less shared spaces between city and suburb and city and town, hence “environs.” This week is particularly circuitous... If I were messaging from a cell phone, I could send photos instead of all these words. What I am writing to you about, though, originates pre-cell phone. We are going to be doing a reading-writing project together, via an encounter with a small portion of a grand, three-volume book, *The Principle of Hope*, composed between the 1940's and 1960's. For its author, Ernst Bloch, “hope” is an intellectual, or philosophical, emotion and it is associated with the utopian imagination. It is important to understand that for Bloch, utopia is not a contained environment or perfected world with eternal and hence unchangeable laws but rather it is a construct that enlists a process through which one engages with a “world full of propensity toward something.” The improvisatory and performative aspects of writing that can enable transgression of categories and boundaries of thought and genre seem to me, potentially or provisionally, to be emerging from or agents of such processes.

In one of my letters, I will tell you a little about what compelled me to read Ernst Bloch in the first place, but just now I want to explain as simply as possible why I have *returned* to reading Bloch with increased concentration. At some point in the last seven years, I found that my imagination of the future, or my feeling for the future, was disappearing: I have yet to assess how personal or depressive was my attitude—or how shared with others, but the impersonal and numbing Bush Era is an aspect of the social ecology that precipitated this experience of “disappearing.” The accelerated destructiveness of global capitalism, climate change, and the intensified cognition of the Anthropocene as out-of-control actuality may still loom as impossible abstractions, but not without vivid and palpable material effect, including the physical and biological effects that grand abstractions can motivate, negatively, in a person. Around

2009, I felt that I was slowly being absorbed in a death-drive vortex that shocked me into repurposing my relationship to “the future.” At a certain moment, the horizon (of future? of imagination?) was not receding but getting way too close, and it was not utopic but rather a quasi-blinding obstruction. This reminds me of the way the poet Jackson Mac Low has described history:

Not as any kind of upward-tending line or spiral but as an irregular three- dimensional curve that is as likely to sink definitively below the horizon as to mount to the zenith.⁵

What I like about Mac Low’s description is the sense of curving, dimension, and horizon that are not predicated on a single track that moves up and down. What is “under” the horizon may be brutal, but it may be something else as well. I can also imagine historical form as even more irregular than what Mac Low has described with stuff in it that can’t get out, ever-increasing pressure on any potential narrative.

Later, in a different context, I encountered a curious refusal to engage such thoughts: such graphing of negative or ambivalent possibility produced the wrong political response. This is something I am still thinking about, but not because I agree. In Bloch, what is missing in the world and not-yet conscious in ourselves are the negative conditions in which the hope-drive delivers the goods of fantasy to reality. Realized change is never an end in itself. Any concrete realization of hope would be an aspect of a process that renders the concrete utopia subject to emergent critical consciousness.⁶

I am grateful to the group at the Public School in Oakland who helped me conduct an experiment with The Principle of Hope for a month in November 2013, as we were able to construct a chorus of singular voices all approaching the text and our hopeful work together differently, or, in “the singular plural.”⁷ Our gathering at Pratt springs from this initial experiment with Bloch, even as we will be focusing on one or two aspects of the work instead of the entire text.

Yours, Carla

P.S. this first letter was written out of order and continuously revised as I went along.

August 2015

Dear Writers,

I have been thinking about the intersection between philosophy and “creative” writing as one of potentially productive agitation, since around the time I returned to Bloch’s *The Principle of Hope*. Recently, *Theory A Sunday*, a book originally released in Canada in French in the 1980s, was published in English by Belladonna Press. It makes available a valuable collective-feminist discussion on the topic of writing and theory in the form of cogent, inventive essays and samples from creative works. It is an instance of the many works of poetics in the last half of the 20th century that undermine strictures that place the creative text in a category separate from the critical text. I strongly recommend it, as it not only demonstrates the usefulness of theory to radical experimental feminists in Quebec at a significant historical moment, but it also exemplifies a collective form for learning and for making art that can encourage collaborative activations in the present.⁸

I wish to refer to “Some Ways Philosophy Has Helped to Shape My Work,” the essay I cited from Jackson Mac Low (1922–2004) in my first letter, which speaks directly to poets’ productive misuse of philosophy.

Although, I “majored” in philosophy in the early 1940s at the University of Chicago and I have continually read philosophical works since then, my competence as a student of philosophy has never been very great. But possibly this very incompetence has been fruitful. That is, philosophers may have influenced my work meaningfully

through misreadings or through misapplications (or skewed applications) of concepts (or even dogmas) gained from more or less valid readings and from oral teaching.⁹

I would draw a generality from Mac Low's comment about his personal engagement with philosophy—Eastern, Continental, and American—that poets often use philosophy for aesthetic purposes that do not conform to the discipline of philosophy, and this gap between the poet's reading of philosophy and the discipline of philosophy is generative of the writer's poetics. This may seem to many of you like a self-evident comment, but it is nonetheless relevant to our encounter with Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*. In his little essay, Mac Low describes his first encounter with the *Poetics* when he was in graduate school at The University of Chicago. In that period and in decades previous, Aristotle's *Poetics* were held up as the exemplary poetics for all drama, thus producing a model by which dramatic works following the classical Greek tragedies were deemed lesser works, including those of Shakespeare. The *Poetics* were proof of the West's fall, beyond the classical period. However, at Chicago, Aristotle's *Poetics*, widely taught in many disciplines, were interpreted as "an analytically descriptive back-ward looking work, rather than as a prescriptive forward looking one." With this view, "it would follow that one would have to develop a somewhat different poetics for different types of tragedy e.g. Shakespeare." Mac Low goes on to attribute his experimental poetry and performance to the understanding he derived from Richard Peter McKeon's approach to the *Poetics* at the University of Chicago, as the necessity for leaving the classical mandate behind became apparent through the new interpretation of Aristotle.

I have gone on long enough with my example of the poet's potential relationship to philosophy—and there are so many versions! It's time for me to get to the daydream, which is the entryway to the philosophical principle of hope. Through his *Little Daydreams*, Ernst Bloch opens his investigation to the everyday wish-maker and the reader of fairytales. These folksy pieces mixed with allegory lead us to Bloch's

powerful introduction to “anticipatory consciousness.” The daydream might offer one an insight into this future-tending consciousness, illuminating the signs of hope stirring within its commonplaces and oddities. Simultaneously, it manifests the social conditioning of the imagination and thus its limitations in any given present. I should clarify that Bloch’s daydreams are simultaneously the rendering of actual fantasies and interpretations of political desire or content that can be reinterpreted through a revolutionary political perspective. They are not political in the way that politicians these days use the tropes of hope or dream to get us to believe in their run for office.

Through the daydream, Bloch was able to reflect upon developmental phases of a human life and the way that life phases are experienced or understood apart from as well as joined to the social and discursive narratives that attach themselves to the meaning of “childhood,” “youth,” or “old age.” The imaginatively limited daydreams that Bloch portrays, some of which are derived from interviews with friends, are treated as emanations of the “Not-Yet,” a catalyst within ourselves “that would take us from a static concept of being to one of becoming.”

Bloch holds in tension the positive and negative aspects or projections of fantasy of the cultural objects he investigates in order to unlock the possibility latent within their iterations. This tactic seems to me akin to what a lyric artist might do when they construct aesthetically compelling surfaces, which deploy discordant or dysphoric content.

*You bathe yourself this side of the most discordant cries on the
dreamy spumes of grass
when fire is exhaled from the widow boat that consumes the cape
of the echo’s flash*
—Aimé Césaire¹⁰

Although many of the daydreams Bloch documents convey wishes almost benignly inscribed within commonplaces of class culture (to be a hero following discordant cries from the grasses

of leisure), he does not ignore the spume of the more malignant daydreams. “Night of the Long Knives,” which appears partway through the daydream sequence, remarks on a proto-fascist sensibility:

Not so far from here are the various dreams that are fond of getting their own back. They are particularly delicious, revenge is sweet when merely imagined, but also shabby. Most men are too cowardly to do evil, too weak to do good; the evil that they cannot, or cannot yet do, they enjoy in advance in the dream of revenge. The petit bourgeoisie in particular has traditionally been fond of the fist clenched in the pocket; this fist characteristically thumps the wrong man, since it prefers to lash out in the direction of least resistance.¹¹

Here he is glossing or characterizing a generic form of daydream, while placing it within the abyss of brutality through which Hitler murders officials in the Nazi party in order to consolidate his power. It is as if he is observing the psychical past from which violence draws itself out in an actual event. In transposing the event into its pre-existing daydream, Bloch both enlarges and allegorizes its potential meaning beyond or other to the event.

Such glossing is more and less his *modus operandi* throughout the daydream series, as Bloch is constructing an allegorical narrative that yet offers the reader an open space of potential identification, disidentification, critique and interpretation. I am drawn to this allegory of the shabby, proto-fascist because it so aptly describes common human behaviors and their psychological dimension in joining them to the most frightening form of modern populism.

While as a philosopher Bloch is recognized for his literariness, a contemporary writer will note many dated qualities of his writing. As is common until recent times, Bloch's pronouns privilege the masculine, while his references to women are also typically skimpy and reductive when they do arise. The conventions of outdated pronoun usage should not be conflated

with Bloch's blind spots regarding gender. In *Cruising Utopia*, a critical incorporation of Bloch's *Hope* into the framework of queer studies, José Muñoz notes, "...it has been rumored that Bloch did not hold very progressive opinions on issues of gender and sexuality."¹² I think you will find such "opinions" are coded into the language of Bloch's *Little Daydream* reflections, and in the absence of reflection on the gendering of fantasy material. Muñoz takes the rumor and opinion of biographical information to be "beside the point"; whereas, I see it (as well as other prejudice) in the content itself and thus take an alternative view, which allows antagonism its place. I follow Muñoz, however, in his attitude toward "using Bloch's theory not as orthodoxy but instead to create an opening." Bloch's theory of hope, paradoxically, significantly contributed to my own feminist poetics.

In other respects, Bloch's language (while noting we read in translation) can seem annoyingly old-fashioned and stilted, especially when he is drawing from fairy tales and folktales as he does in his daydream book. In the quote above, I paused over a number of phrases, and most particularly this platitude, "most men are too cowardly to do evil, too weak to do good."

I have begun in a low-key fashion to respond to Bloch's *Little Daydreams* by writing daydreams. I will include several in my letters to you. Perhaps together we should create a genre of the daydream, a genre that has no restrictions on what might pass for "daydream."

DAYDREAM 7

"You can't move off the dime." That was a voice from nowhere, the clear signal that it was necessary to move if one wished to know what was concealed on the ground under the shoe. Now the dime is exposed, shiny still gleaming in the summer day sun. It could be this way forever, with the meaning of a small event suspended in a light that one relishes and longs for all at once. A parent gives courage to the child who returns the gift with joyful bonds. She is on her way to a better school across the bridge in a mostly white world. In the middle of a bridge

she dropped a dime, a small token glistening on a bridge at the midpoint between two worlds.

Daydreams can arise from undesirable presets. This one may be symptomatic of foreclosure or the foreclosure of property's fixed status. *The fallen dime radiates an audacity beyond the values of token economy* is a thought-wave figuring the wish. The wish also washes the imagination in grueling details that are difficult to discern here, at the midpoint, and are yet to be incorporated into the account of the wish—at a remove, at a later date, or elsewhere in words that spring forth from someone else's mind. Much of this began as a radio transmission on the topic of re-segregation.

How many technologies said to be out of date still imprint themselves on everyday life and consciousness?¹³

Yrs, Carla

August 2015

*Thinking means venturing beyond*¹⁴

DAYDREAM 9

If I had a hammer

Against the dark-light trope, I brain the hammer. That is, I apply my thoughts to a tool. Or I knock the sense out of it such that its utility is beyond my grasp. My hammer and I dance on the edge of the world amorously kicking up nonsense, but the brains of the hammer seek a wedge. So where the edge meets the nothing that exposes its physical existence to abstract thought, the hammer claws a bit of the edge away from the nothing. So we can crawl under the edge and stay between it and nothing.

February 18, 2017

DOCUMENT B

PAPER

How to Read *The Principle of Hope*

Report on a collective reading practice and its contexts¹⁴

Introduction

The good new is never the completely new—Ernst Bloch

The Bay Area Public School is an affiliate of the international project identified as The Public School. The front page of its website refers to its origins in Los Angeles, its international scope, and its politics of learning:

The idea of the Public School originated in 2007 at Telic Arts Exchange in Los Angeles as, “a framework that supports autodidactic activities.” Soon there were Public School outposts around the world holding a variety of classes in miscellaneous spaces and gathering people to learn together outside of official educational institutions through the Public School website.

The Bay Area Public School arose as a response to the dismantling of Occupy Oakland and as an extension, in new form, of the transformative experiences that Occupy activists sought as the means toward “making another world possible,” an affirmation stressed by poet Sarah Larsen in her report on Oakland Occupy presented during the ASAP Conference in Detroit two years ago.

Existence of the Bay Area Public School, or BAPC, is dependent on a group of people who can fund and/or raise funds for a space in which “absolutely” free education can take place. The financial backers of the school are also active participants in this democratic, horizontal approach to teaching and learning, an approach that envisions a theoretical “anybody” participating in the school as either teacher or student. Proposals do have to be submitted and vetted by a volunteer group. A class taught by Diane di Prima on myth, a class on film theory, and several language classes were among those offered during the three weeks of the seminar I “facilitated” in November 2013. The coordinates of Public School pedagogy are complemented by a system of governance in which people take turns running meetings, setting agendas, and in which anyone can be a voting member after attending one meeting.

Since the time of my Bloch seminar, which took place in a downtown Oakland building shared with a hacker group, the Bay Area Public School relocated to the Omni in the Temescal area of Oakland. The Omni is a collective neighborhood anti-gentrification project that employs “radical sharing” in its support of art, education, and social projects. An article in the East Bay Express identifies it as “one of the largest and most ambitious projects for arts, science, and activism in the Bay Area...an effort by a group of multidisciplinary collectives to pool creative and political resources into a free public space in a building that has stood in Temescal since the 1930s.”¹⁵ This risky move to a larger shared space is not without its battle scars as some of the poets who initiated the post-occupy project have left it, and it appears that the project is changing its educational focus.

Co-organizer (and co-founder) David Larsen’s association of The Public School with the lineage of Black Mountain College, Naropa, and New College of San Francisco suggests an alignment

with institutions of private sector economy, as if the wish for free, non-monetized education could be seen as a fulfillment of the educational freedom students pay for in the progressive private school. While I am not prepared to tease out the affinities and contradictions of the free school and the private school just now, I note that the reputations of those schools I have mentioned partly depend on the aura, authority, and even authoritarianisms of “the artist” and “the poet,” capital A and P. This to me is one of the more agitating contradictions between the horizontal format of the Bay Area Public School and what it once saw at its legacy. This contradiction presented itself to me as I committed myself to an experiment in reading Bloch, one in which classroom dynamics were entirely open to change at each meeting, determined by what people brought to the session, and in which anybody could attend whether or not they had read or prepared anything—except me—whose self-chosen mandate, predicated on the time an academic leave afforded me, was to read everything.

The Principle of Hope is the three volume, opus magnus in which Ernst Bloch makes an extensive attempt to “bring philosophy to hope, as to a place in the world which is as inhabited as the best civilized land and as unexplored as the Antarctic.”¹⁶ This hope or “expectation toward possibility that has still not become” is a “principal in the world,” while its actual utopian expression in the world is “unilluminated explicitly” and its “future tense,” historically repressed. Bloch compares this to the suppression of the future tense in the first Latin grammars, something I key into here because of the Public School’s interest in dead languages. Bloch’s utopian project a-synchronically approaches what already exists in the world in terms of the imagined and potential better world. The hope-construct is characterized by the imagination of the possibility of a better life combined with a critical attitude toward any given concrete utopia, whether it is a product of the imagination or actualized in society. Bloch views utopia as always in a process of becoming. The Marxist thinkers of the West have sometimes misapprehended an intellectual who worked in East Germany during the Cold War for some period. Bloch’s critical

stance toward the Soviet state as an incomplete utopian project and his insistence on free expression precipitated his departure from the University of Leipzig in the 1970s and his taking up residency at the University of Tübingen at the time in which the Berlin wall was erected.¹⁷ There are currently new developments in Bloch studies with an institute established in the UK.

In the past several years, partly because of a prior, long-term interest in Bloch and especially his capacious interpretations of artworks in which he finds signs of utopian desire and futurity in even the most negative expressions, partly because of the way that “hope” gets bandied about in contemporary political media such that no one in their right mind dare use the term without circumspection, and partly because I found my own imagination stuck on a sense that the shifting horizon of possibility was getting very close to the point of obstructing my ability to think past an impossible climate changing financial freezing present, I decided to read Bloch’s opus and conduct some reading and writing experiments that derive from it. One of these, which I call “How to Read the Principle of Hope” involves engaging with open-ended reading and (sometimes) writing practices in a laboratory-like context. These contexts are ones in which I have personal and/or artistic connections: they involve educational projects that themselves are exhibits of hope, whose orientations are toward realizing a better world in an activist and political sense. Whether these are local, grassroots projects or programs that exist in established institutions—their economies and their prospects of survival are fragile.

At the Public School, we wouldn’t really read *The Principle of Hope* as students of philosophy. Our taking on what Frederic Jameson describes as “the vast and disorderly exploration of the manifestation of hope on all levels of reality was not a matter of pinpointing its relevance to a discipline.”¹⁸ We would not seek to derive conclusions such as those made by Slavoj Žižek in his preface to *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*, even as we did use Bloch’s text as an object for reflecting upon the actual concrete utopia of *The Public School*.

Zizek considers Bloch's *Hope* through a historical filter that takes into account our familiar contemporary assessment of revolution as that which is "betrayed by market reality." Beyond this commonplace understanding of betrayal is the real possibility of universal emancipation that is disseminated through "revolutionary explosion":

In the revolutionary explosion as an Event, another utopian dimension shines through, the dimension of universal emancipation, which is the excess betrayed by the market reality that takes over "the day after." ¹⁹

Absorbed back into the logic of capitalism, hope's excess is "transposed into virtual states, continuing to haunt the emancipatory imaginary as a dream waiting to be realized."²⁰ Of course the experience of encounter in a micro-community like that in our free school classroom would conflict with such glosses, given the class discussions were not themselves virtual. How might one think about the modes in which the dream is sustained, fought for, carried forward among persons? Perhaps one can't compare totalizing encapsulations such as Zizek's to the strong particular identifications that arise in micro utopian classroom. The gap in scale is enormous. From the perspective of table talk in the funky institutional-green room of an unkempt building, where the elevator sort of works (if you can find it near the entrance of the sometimes unlit side door) and food is left out on counters for anybody that can access it, Zizek's gloss on Bloch's hope might seem more like a protective shield positioned against such incommensurate, multifarious desires as those emerging from the Public School site. Multifarious is a term Public School co-founder Sara Larsen associates with "the beauty of radical praxis...being multifarious and not myopic, this is the secret to what makes it WORK: everyone offers what they can, and hopefully also they teach and learn from others."

Class documents and report

Classes one and two: “Daydreams” (complete) and “Anticipatory Consciousness” (selections: 45-81; 82-113, 196-229);

Select a passage, short or long, you wish to read from and discuss;” make a radical rewriting of one or more passages from “Little Daydreams”; dilated reading: choose one or two passages, phrases, sentences, areas and write or comment extensively. Saturate the response to the given segments until you can’t do more or until they break down, exhaust themselves, transform, burn out; write a performative work using keywords and phrasing as characters and mediums for dialogue; write your own theory of the daydream; what do you think about Bloch’s use of Freud?’ Prepare notes for a discussion of Bloch’s writing style.

Class three: Outlines for a Better World (Construction): Choose from “Social Utopias,” “Technological Utopias,” Architectural Utopias,” or “Free Time” and *prepare a response in the form of notes, annotations, questions, performance, thesis, micro essay, lecture, score, visual event or something else.*

Our coming together, the seven to fourteen of us under the banner of no requirements (including attendance) and the aegis of *The Principle of Hope*, was a setup for a polyphonic conversation whose direction no one could anticipate, but which, as such was a kind of manifestation of “anticipatory consciousness.” More palpably, this was a game of alternate scanning and immersion, then lighting on something that would put us on pause without a fixed necessity of goal, direction, or instruction. I think of the quality of this pausing over the text as tracing back to the ontology of Occupy where for some a new space of living had dilated into a new way of living that would change them forever—whatever the disruption or trauma of Occupy’s demise and the consequences of this on the future forms derived from it. This trace of Occupy in the educational project that followed it was shared among the people in the seminar whether or not they had directly participated in the occupation.

Each of us who brought in work would come to class having taken up something that was particular to that person's interests. An artist became interested in a sidebar—the fact that Bloch and Walter Benjamin had opposite interpretations of Paul Klee's twelve by eight inch painting, a possession of Benjamin's, in which, as we all know, a rather small "angel of history" with curiously positioned, side glancing eyes floats on an abstract textured surface of paint. In a 1929 essay, Bloch interprets the angel "with horror in front of him and the wind of the future at his back."²¹ "Where is the debris of history of Benjamin's interpretation?" Or the sign of the Blochian future? If Marxists are concerned with materiality, she asks, how might one describe the materiality of the painting? What might one make of the abstract space on which the angel is suspended in Klee's piece? While Kathleen Frumkin researched Klee's *Angelus Novis*, I concentrated on Bloch's use of Freud, his reversing of the concept of latency as future rather than past, collective rather than individually based. Laura Woltang, a poet and environmentalist doing a life-long field study of loons at a lake near where she grew up in Vermont, would deliver her notes on Bloch's consideration of the pastoral in a forty-five-minute lecture. Here are some of her notes and quotes:

We spent some time wandering in the passage below, which I would like to re-engage/ spark discussion about with all who are interested:

Thus there is of course no synthesis between mechanical and landscape nature; a nature without qualities is far more alien to that of forests, mountains, and luminous stars than the Christian negated one was. And precisely Shiller's non-synthesis between the mechanical and the qualitative particularly indicates the problem, the truth, not worked up as it were, of the pastoral view on bourgeois soil. It concerns a different sector of nature than that appertaining to mathematical natural science, but it relates to it in a pre-capitalist way. The pastoral view, the view into forests, mountains, and oceans, has -- like the public festivals -- kept alive a great, wonderful element of non-mechanical

response which one day can and will enter into concrete leisure; however, the access to it is, as a pre-capitalist one in a capitalist age, still largely archaic-romantic. There is in it just as much conjuration of a submerged objectivity as astonishment and meeting of one coming up undischarged, i.e. of a truth of the pastoral on which precisely leisure has to prove itself and can prove itself. But only a no longer abstract economic system will bring, even in matters of nature-experience, that elimination of the differences between city and country which among its other consequences also *contains the elimination of the dualism between urban and landscape physics* (919).

I am interested in going back to the German here (with some help?!) to understand Bloch's use of the idea of the pastoral with what we think of as other to that in wilderness/sea, etc. Is the pastoral here just the view, itself? The pre-capitalist archaic-romantic lens through which the spirit of 'release' is kept alive, that is still extant. A view we've brought with us, or appears as trace, for an experience of liberation, or a projection of a utopian, restful land. I wonder what the German word he is using for "pastoral" here. I will continue typing the rest of the page, as things keep shifting...

Poet Kit Robinson performed an exercise he titled "Sparks of Truth," whereby he paired quotes from Bloch's "Little Daydreams" and "Anticipatory Consciousness" with citations from other writers including Jack Zipes' introduction to *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, Daniel C. Matt's *The Essential Kabbalah*, the poet Bill Berkson's *Snippets*, Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself,"—"Urge and urge and urge,/Always the procreative urge of the world"—ending his citational essay by paring a passage from "Anticipatory Consciousness,"

All definitions of basic drives only flourish in the soil of their time and are limited to that time. For this simple reason they cannot be made absolute, even less separated from the economic being of mankind in each age.

with this passage from C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegards & Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live in*:

Melville saw the tendency of things, and over and over again the words he uses bring to mind the contemporary millions who constitute the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the vast administrative machines that now dominate modern life.

With each pairing, Robinson creates a thought-piece that sparks agitation between the concepts of continuity and change. This tactic is similar to something he does in his recent poetry, whereby, in contrast to deploying a Steinian “beginning again” temporality, Robinson begins elsewhere in each line, “A stray dot appears above your name in the winter sky / Let me know if there’s anything I can get you.”²² This elsewhere seems significant to what I am attempting to record, including the elsewhere of Bloch’s work from the artist’s use of it.

If this is a sampling of what manifested or remains from the free school seminars, what does the sample suggest? How do I read the sample? The visual artist brings to a canonical reading a question about projection and what is being read. She raises the question of what are the stakes in the projection vs. what are the actual relationships between material and image in a painting, querying interpretive mechanisms. A poet points us in the direction of leisure and through this the relationship of urban to rural life as potential, catalytic views that we bear across epochs to retain an actual experience of liberation within psychic (as opposed to virtual?) life. Here the archaic-romantic is both a drag on our apprehension, a “mere view,” and trace of liberation born within us. The past is a strand of dead time with a motile, living tip on it. The basic drives are not gods but mortals, moving to Kit Robinson’s pairing of Bloch and C.L.R. James. We may think we live in the only era there is, but the past “hewers of wood” brought us to this point, to the “vast administrative machine” that draws on our attention. I end this wondering, what is the relationship of the

administrative machine to the death drive? “Something important is missing so the dream inserts itself into the gaps.”

Coda

At a later moment, at Pratt Institute of the Arts we conduct an experiment in daydreaming, called the invention of the genre of the daydream. In addition to Bloch’s “Little Daydreams,” a creative critical text that opens *The Principle of Hope*, I present participants with examples of my own post-Blochian daydreams. We query how we can read him now. For some of us, it is difficult to get past his unhip literary language and stilted references to gender, his patriarchal subjectivity embedded in philosophy. But I encourage people to do what I have done myself, to make use of the text and not mimic it, to follow its multifarious possibilities. And thus, because Phoebe Glick’s daydream so thoroughly brings us into our All American negative present while sustaining a connection to the critical utopia and Bloch’s language, I shall end by reading her response:

MUCH TASTES OF MORE

now that the creators of fear have been dealt with, a feeling that suits us better is over due—Ernst Bloch

I’m standing in a gas station in Missouri off the interstate, 100 miles away from Ferguson on the anniversary of Mike Brown’s shooting. Last night I dreamt about police violence waking and reawakening, laying on the floor of the sticky tent, dripping out of myself and forming a person-shaped smear of warm water. I pick up white cheddar cheez-its and stroll mindlessly through the store’s 4 snack aisles. Daydreams vary based on the sociocultural environment of the individual. A man stands in line with 2 blonde boys. One of them points to the cashier, explaining to his father that you can’t steal, or you’ll go to jail. You have to buy things, or you’ll go to jail. You have to buy things, you’ll go to jail. He repeats it like a mantra. I loop around the donut holes. A restlessness bunches on interstate like a thick cloud of flies.

Boredom is the motivation for daydreamers who have no antagonism to the notion of hope. The restlessness turns into a person and is allowed to act. The boy turns his pointer finger towards me. He tries his luck, it tastes forbidden. Fear breaks out if what we are used to runs away. He calls me a "boy lady." The cheez-its and I stand still. I'm in the same aisle I went through before. My body sprouts new hair and the cheez-its heat up and start to burn my palm. I throw them. From here what we like doing best is playing and collecting window-views, deep and brief glimpses into otherness. The bag combusts in air and the crackers come shooting out of the blast as hot embers. Fire rains down on the store. Everyone ducks for cover and starts making for the door. It's our jobs to see the person in front of us, but the imagination is an instrument of othering. Black people are dying because white people won't police their own imaginations. The imagination of whiteness, the wild featureless jungle of no reality. The fascist daydream and the tremor of ignorance. Something important is missing so the dream inserts itself into the gaps. I follow the boy lady out of the convenience store and onto the interstate. We want to become artists, so we dream ourselves onto a mountain. The interstate breaks into pieces and burns for days. The mountain lifts her skirt and reveals the night sky. We go in to count the moons. The boy lady bounces from moon to moon, propelled out of physicality by the buoyancy of the dream. When someone dreams, they never remain rooted to the spot. We practice playing around in our names. We stir the fermenting day.²³

Dear Writers,

I would like to tell you something about the history of my interests in and engagements with the writing of our author of *The Principle of Hope*.

When I first encountered Bloch I was looking for something to help me think about the connection between erotic desire, libidinal drive, and writing.

Julia Kristeva's discourse of the symbolic and semiotic aspects of language and her understanding of revolutionary aesthetics as transgressions of the symbolic (the stable language system) offered one of several useful feminist perspectives on both the artistic rebellion and transgression of the censored and the primary relationship between language and desire productive of avant-garde poetry and an emerging feminist poetics. I was drawn to many of the French feminists of the time, but I will not rehearse now all that drew me in—except to note that if you have not read Monique Wittig's essay on The Social Contract in *The Straight Mind*, I recommend the text.

As a potent critic of Freud and the patriarchal narrative derived from Freudianism, Wittig was the only one of these writers who addressed the question of utopia and the utopian imagination, the thing that I was grappling with along with this question of language and Eros. It was clear to me that utopian desire, language, and the Eros of language were connected. It was around this time that I concocted a scenario that opposed itself to male-centered, Sartrean freedom and also discovered the works of Bloch. It was at a quite felicitous moment because the figures in my poet's novel, *The Words: after Jean Paul Sartre and Carl Sandburg's Rootabaga Stories*, were a collective of the very young who lived on the other side of the tracks in a world foreign to middle class individualism and who were narrated as a group or "we" whose playful, intellectual, and physical energies were governed by a preadolescent latency that motivated their transgressive border crossings (of physical spaces and intellectual systems). As this eroticized latency didn't conform to Freud's sense of buried sexuality, I tuned my attention to Bloch's contingent understanding of the term. This latency of sexuality

assigned to children was transforming into the latency of a wished-for imagination that could instigate a better world. Their polyvocal collectivity illuminated the Not-Yet of the world that they were in.

I have to stop writing! And shall in just a minute. In light of the precariousness of recent global rebellions, philosopher and Bloch scholar Peter Thompson asks “whether hope can still exist in anything other than an atomized, desocialized, and privatized form?”²⁴ He then appeals to Bloch’s concept of educated hope, which is predicated on failure, experience “and resistance to an everyday acceptance of reality.”

Bloch’s is not the hope of cheesy political rhetoric or greenhouse emission advertising. His is a hope that itself seems to seek a new ontology, a new condition of being that yet is connected to traces within history and to our earliest movements, “I move. From birth on we are searching. All we do is crave, cry out. Do not have what we want.”²⁵ Hope emerges from and is based in such primary activations. Bloch’s hope pivots between the consciousness of the most basic needs and the emergent consciousness of “the better world” that can satisfy them. The human or person as a hopeful being is situated within and between the basic need and the emergent consciousness. Thus, hope first seeds itself in craving and the transposition of something craved into wishing. Hope is cultivated in the environment established in the wish.

August 2015

Dear R,

Yesterday I was a guest at a poetry reading in a women's federal prison, officially identified as "correctional facility." I am not inclined to write much about this, but rather to note it as an experience just now affecting my frame of mind. I heard the prisoners read their works—of poetry and experiment, of struggle and accomplishment, of bravery and vulnerability. Today each poet is still in jail. On the outside, I am anticipating their published texts. With all permissions in place, they will slip into public circulation. "I have come to the view that women should not ever be locked up," says my friend Susan, who has taught in prisons.

Coincidentally, what I had wished to remind you of before completing (or abandoning) this project, was *Günderode*, the novel-in-letters of Bettina Brentano von Arnim to her friend Günderode, the German Romantic poet I had mentioned to you whose life was constrained by a form of poverty bestowed on bourgeois women. Without means of her own, she was sheltered in a nunnery, free to leave but without the resources to do so. In her situation, there were few crimes she was able to commit, but she did resolve on at least one so-called crime, suicide. There was another, which was to love. In Brentano von Arnim's version of this, love has more than one object and the objects themselves are the troubled vectors of a sex-gender system that can only be understood retrospectively.

Bettina was ardent and fierce in her friendship, and the letters between them took flight as a writing-Eros, uncontainable in the epistolary form, which served as an open framework for any possible written expression. Through the letters their poetry, philosophical flights, and dramatic dialogues slipped into and accompanied passages of the self-reflection, confession, description of everyday life, and anecdote of the epistolary mode.

I discovered the works of Brentano von Arnim through a scant reference in one of Bloch's *Little Daydreams*, in which he invokes the wishful world of adolescence:

Talking at this time is common and easy, writing hard, and if it is produced, the fruit appears precisely to the overflowing writer himself 'like a shriveled plum, black and wizened'. Bettina von Arnim, who says this, and who all her life could not get beyond this adolescent feeling, thus mostly chose letters to express herself.²⁶

At another time, I shall more fully explore the gift that Bloch's sexist criticism of the author has brought to me. But here I note that if he had not cited von Arnim's most apt and marvelous description of that which embarrassingly, disappointingly divides a sense of desire and possibility of the object to be made from that which one has actually been accomplished, I would likely never have encountered von Arnim's body of work and followed what I could find of it in English.

While this excursion into the work of Bloch begins in many other sources, my stumbling upon that brief citation changed its trajectory, at least a little. This stumbling upon is nested within some larger frameworks, which yet remain "small" in at least one of the senses of "small" I think Sarah's citation of your words invokes. At present, no reprise is necessary.

Love, C

May, 2017

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to Kathleen Frumkin, Kit Robinson, Laura Woltang, Sara Larsen, and Phoebe Glick for permission to use their contributions. Additional thanks to David Larsen, Andy Joran, and all the Public School seminar participants. Thanks also to those who participated in the meetings at Pratt Institute as well as to Brian Whitener, for his invitation to discuss *The Principle of Hope* in a study group at the University of Michigan.

Notes:

¹ Caitríona Ní Dhúill, “Engendering the Future: Bloch’s Utopian Philosophy in Dialogue with Gender Theory,” in *Privatization of Hope*, eds. Peter Thompson and Slavoj Žižek, 155. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013.

² See durationpress.com/sarah-riggs/

³ Ernst Bloch., *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Place (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1986), 123.

⁴ From a paragraph deleted from *Artifact of Hope*.

⁵ See “Some Ways Philosophy Has Helped to Shape My Work,” in *A Guide to Poetics Journal*, eds., Lyn Hejinian and Barrett Watten (Mass; Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 121.

⁶ For example, “Its space is the objectively real possibility within process, along the path of the Object itself, in which what is radically intended by man is not delivered anywhere but not thwarted anywhere either.” *The Principle of Hope*, 7.

⁷ “From one singular to another, there is contiguity but not continuity. There is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up.” Jean-Luc Nancy. *Singular Plural*, translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne (Stanford, Calif., 2000), 5.

⁸ As an example, Rachel Levitsky acknowledges the impact of the work of the *Sunday* theory writers on Belladonna press in the afterward to the volume. I quote this at length because of the way she takes the contrasting scale of global activism and activist cultural work into account: “today, 25 years later for the authors of this book, 14 years later for belladonna, we publish this translation into a new world for politics in general and feminism in particular, one in which “ism-ization” and group “identity” gathering have merged as fully suspect, threatening to the popular globalized idea of a human “we” that must get along, save the planet, meet in a flash mob, or in response to an emergent political necessity (anti-austerity movements, tahrir, occupies massive anti-rape protests in india, egypt, brazil, taksim square: cleared out by ergodan’s massive force this week), not offend to the point of alienation. yet, the feminist space of belladonna collaborative, our tender courage with each other to confront the challenges that face particular (women, poets) writers, and now to re-engage and confront racial segregation in our own group and in poetry, begs for the model of engagement of hunkering down, taking ourselves seriously,

making something together that *Theory, A Sunday* allows us to imagine, re-imagine.” Louky Bersianik et.al., *Theory, A Sunday*. (New York, Belladonna), 153-154.

⁹ *A Guide to Poetics Journal*, p. 119

¹⁰ “The Serpent” by Aimé Césaire is here translated by Clayton Eshleman and A. James Arnold and presented on Jerome Rothenberg’s Blog in 2010. Jerome Rothenberg, *Poems and Poetics*, January 13, 2010.

¹¹ Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 30.

¹² José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2009), 2.

¹³ New post-election radio programs or stations of note in the Detroit area include Arab American activist Fatima Salman’s “Between the Lines,” established in March 2017 and Rustbelt Abolition Radio: soundcloud.com/rustbeltabolitionradio

¹⁴ A shorter version of the paper was given at *ASAP/7 (The Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present)* held in Greenville, South Carolina, September 24-27, 2015.

¹⁵ Julian Mark, “Radically Sharing Temescal,” *East Bay Express*, (Oakland, California), January 21, 2015.

¹⁶ *The Principle of Hope*, 6.

¹⁷ For those interested, these and other aspects of Bloch’s life including his exile in the United States are discussed by Jack Zipes in a number of articles as well as his Introduction to the collection of essays translated into English, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*.

¹⁸ Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, (NJ, Princeton University Press, 1971), 120.

¹⁹ Slavoj Zizek, “Preface” in *The Privatization of Hope*, eds. Zizek and Peter Thompson (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2013). xix.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Ernst Bloch, “On Images of Nature Since the End of the Nineteenth Century” in *Literary Essays*, trans. Andy Joran (Calif., Stanford University Press, 1998), 409..

²² Kit Robinson, “Unconfirmed Report,” *Across the Margin* (May 27, 2015). <http://acrossthemargin.com/two-poems-by-kit-robinson/>

²³ Phoebe Glick, “Much Tastes of More,” *Fanzine*, December 18, 2015. <http://thefanzine.com/two-poems-9/>

²⁴ Peter Thompson, “Introduction,” *The Privatization of Hope*, 5.

²⁵ *The Principle of Hope*, 27-28.

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