

Now is the phantom chapter to the Invisible Committee's previous book, *To Our Friends*, a new critique from the anonymous collective that establishes their opposition to the world of capital and its law of labor, addresses current antiterrorist rhetoric and the ferocious repression that comes with it, and clarifies the end of social democracy and the growing rumors of the need for a coming "civil war." *Now* emerges at a time when the Invisible Committee's contestation has found resonance throughout the West, with a collapse of trust in the police, an inept weariness on the part of the political system, a growing urgency for opposition, a return of the theme of the Commune, a vanishing distinction between radicals and citizens, and a widespread refusal on the part of the citizen to be governed. *Now* proposes a "destituent process" that charts out a different path to be taken, a path of outright refusal that simply ignores elections altogether. It is a path that calls for taking over the world and not taking power, for exploring new forms of life and not a new constitution, and for desertion and silence as alternatives to proclamations and crashes. It is also a call for an unprecedented communism—a communism stronger than nation and country.

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The Invisible Committee

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Now

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TOMORROW IS CANCELED

All the reasons for making a revolution are there. Not one is lacking. The shipwreck of politics, the arrogance of the powerful, the reign of falsehood, the vulgarity of the wealthy, the cataclysms of industry, galloping misery, naked exploitation, ecological apocalypse—we are spared nothing, not even being informed about it all. “Climate: 2016 breaks a heat record,” *Le Monde* announces, the same as almost every year now. All the reasons are there together, but it’s not reasons that make revolutions, it’s bodies. And the bodies are in front of screens.

One can watch a presidential election sink like a stone. The transformation of “the most important moment in French political life” into a big trashing fest only makes the soap opera more captivating. One couldn’t imagine *Koh-Lanta*

with such characters, such dizzying plot twists, such cruel tests, or so general a humiliation. *The spectacle of politics lives on as the spectacle of its decomposition.* Disbelief goes nicely with the filthy landscape. The National Front, that political negation of politics, that negation of politics *on the terrain of politics*, logically occupies the "center" of this chessboard of smoking ruins. The human passengers, spellbound, are watching their shipwreck like a first-rate show. They are so *enthralled* that they don't feel the water that's already bathing their legs. In the end, they'll transform everything into a buoy. The drowning are known for that, for trying to turn everything they touch into a life preserver.

This world no longer needs explaining, critiquing, denouncing. We live enveloped in a fog of commentaries and commentaries on commentaries, of critiques and critiques of critiques of critiques, of revelations that don't trigger anything, other than revelations about the revelations. And this fog is taking away any purchase we might have on the world. There's nothing to criticize in Donald Trump. As to the worst that can be said about him, he's already absorbed, incorporated it. He embodies it. He displays on a gold chain all the complaints that people have ever lodged against him. He is his own caricature, and he's proud of it. Even the

creators of *South Park* are throwing in the towel: "It's very complicated now that satire has become reality. We really tried to laugh about what is going on but it wasn't possible to maintain the rhythm. What was happening was much funnier than what could be imagined. So we decided to let it go, to let them do their comedy, and we'll do ours." We live in a world that has established itself *beyond any justification.* Here, criticism doesn't work, any more than satire does. Neither one has any impact. To limit oneself to denouncing discriminations, oppressions, and injustices, and expect to harvest the fruits of that is to get one's epochs wrong. Leftists who think they can make something happen by lifting the lever of bad conscience are sadly mistaken. They can go and scratch their scabs in public and air their grievances hoping to arouse sympathy as much as they like; they'll only give rise to contempt and the desire to destroy them. "Victim" has become an insult in every part of the world.

There is a social use of language. No one still believes in it. Its exchange value has fallen to zero. Hence this inflationist bubble of idle talk. Everything social is mendacious, and everyone knows that now. It's no longer just the governing authorities, the publicists and public personalities who "do communication," it's every self-entrepreneur

that this society wants to turn us into who practices the art of "public relations." Having become an instrument of communication, language is no longer its own reality but a tool for operating on the real, for obtaining *effects* in accordance with more or less conscious strategies. Words are no longer put into circulation except in order to distort things. Everything sails under false flags. This usurpation has become universal. One doesn't shrink from any paradox. The state of emergency is the rule of law. War is made in the name of peace. The bosses "offer jobs." The surveillance cameras are "video-protection devices." The executioners complain that they're being persecuted. The traitors profess their sincerity and their allegiance. The mediocre are everywhere cited as examples. There is actual practice on the one hand, and on the other, discourse, which is its relentless counterpoint, the perversion of every concept, the universal deception of oneself and of others. In all quarters it's only a question of preserving or extending one's interests. In return, the world is filling up with silent people. Certain ones of these explode into crazy acts of a sort that we've seen at briefer and briefer intervals. What is surprising about this? We should stop saying, "Young people don't believe in anything any more." And say instead: "Damn! They're not swallowing our lies any more." No longer say, "Young people are nihilistic," but "My

lord, if this continues they're going to survive the collapse of our world."

The exchange value of language has fallen to zero, and yet we go on writing. It's because there is another use of language. One can talk about life, and one can talk *from the standpoint of life*. One can talk about conflicts, and one can talk *from the midst of conflict*. It's not the same language, or the same style. It's not the same idea of truth either. There is a "courage of truth" that consists in taking shelter behind the objective neutrality of "facts." There is a different one that considers that speech which doesn't commit one to anything, doesn't stand on its own, doesn't risk its position, doesn't cost anything, is not worth very much. The whole critique of finance capitalism cuts a pale figure next to a shattered bank window tagged with "Here. These are your premiums!" It's not through ignorance that "young people" appropriate rappers' punch lines for their political slogans instead of philosophers' maxims. And it's out of decency that they don't take up the shouts of "We won't give an inch!" by militants who are about to relinquish everything. It's because the latter are talking about the world, and the former are talking *from within a world*.

The real lie is not the one we tell others but the one we tell *ourselves*. The first lie is relatively exceptional

in comparison with the second. The big lie is refusing to see certain things *that one does see*, and refusing to see them *just as one sees them*. The real lie is all the screens, all the images, all the explanations that are allowed to stand between oneself and the world. It's how we regularly dismiss our own perceptions. So much so that where it's not a question of truth, it won't be a question of anything. There will be nothing. Nothing but this planetary insane asylum. Truth is not something one would strive towards, but a frank relation to what is there. It is a "problem" only for those who already see life as a problem. It's not something one professes but a way of being in the world. It is not held, therefore, nor accumulated. It manifests itself in a situation and from moment to moment. Whoever senses the falseness of a being, the noxious character of a representation, or the forces that move beneath a play of images releases any grip these might have had. Truth is a complete presence to oneself and to the world, a vital contact with the real, an acute perception of the givens of existence. In a world where everyone play-acts, where everyone puts on a performance, where one communicates all the more as nothing really is said, the very word "truth" produces a chill or is greeted with annoyance or sniggers. Everything sociable that this epoch contains has become so dependent on the crutches of untruth that it can't do without them.

"Proclaiming the truth" is not at all recommended. Speaking truth to people who can't take even tiny doses of it will only expose you to their vengeance. In what follows we don't claim in any instance to convey "the truth" but rather the perception we have of the world, what we care about, what keeps us awake and alive. The common opinion must be rejected: truths are multiple, but untruth is one, because it is universally arrayed against the slightest truth that surfaces.

All year long we're pummeled with words about the thousand threats that surround us—terrorists, migrants, endocrine disruptors, fascism, unemployment. In this way the unshakeable routine of capitalist normality is perpetuated—against a background of a thousand failed conspiracies, a hundred averted catastrophes. As to the pallid anxiety which they try, day after day, to implant in our heads, by way of armed military patrols, breaking news, and governmental announcements, one has to credit riots with the paradoxical virtue of freeing us from it. This is something that the lovers of those funeral processions called "demonstrations," all those who taste, over a glass of *rouge*, the bitter enjoyment of always being defeated, all those who give out a flatulent "Or else it's going to blow up!" before they prudently climb back into their bus, cannot understand. In a street confrontation,

the enemy has a well-defined face, whether he's in civilian clothes or in armor. He has methods that are largely known. He has a name and a function. In fact, he's a "civil servant," as he soberly declares. The friend, too, has gestures, movements, and an appearance that are recognizable. In the riot there is an incandescent presence to oneself and to others, a lucid fraternity which the Republic is quite incapable of generating. The organized riot is capable of producing what this society cannot create: lively and irreversible bonds. Those who dwell on images of violence miss everything that's involved in the fact of taking the risk together of breaking, of tagging, of confronting the cops. One never comes out of one's first riot unchanged. It's this positivity of the riot that the spectators prefer not to see and that frightens them more deeply than the damage, the charges and counter-charges. In the riot there is a production and affirmation of *friendships*, a focused configuration of the world, clear possibilities of action, means close at hand. The situation has a form and one can move within it. The risks are sharply defined, unlike those nebulous "risks" that the governing authorities like to hang over our existences. The riot is desirable as a moment of truth. It is a momentary suspension of the confusion. In the tear gas, things are curiously clear and the real is finally legible. It's difficult then not to see who is who. Speaking of

the insurrectionary day of July 15, 1927 in Vienna, Elias Canetti said: "It's the closest thing to a revolution that I have experienced. Hundreds of pages would not be enough for describing all that I saw." He drew from that day the inspiration for his masterpiece, *Crowds and Power*. The riot is formative by virtue of what it makes visible.

In the Royal Navy there was this old toast, "Confusion to our enemies!" Confusion has a strategic value. It is not a chance phenomenon. It scatters purposes and prevents them from converging again. It has the ashy taste of defeat, when the battle has not taken place, and probably will never take place. All the recent attacks in France were thus followed by a train of confusion, which opportunely increased the governmental discourse about them. Those who claim them, and those who call for war against those who claim these attacks, all have an interest in our confusion. As for those who carry them out, they are very often children—the children of confusion.

This world that talks so much has nothing to say: it is bereft of positive statements. Perhaps it believed it could make itself immune to attack in this way. More than anything else, however, it placed itself at the mercy of any serious affirmation. A world whose positivity is built on so much devastation deserves to have what is life-affirming

take the form initially of wrecking, breaking, rioting. They always try to portray us as desperate individuals, on the grounds that we act, we build, we attack *without hope*. Hope. Now there's at least one disease this civilization has not infected us with. We're not despairing for all that. No one has ever acted out of hope. Hope is of a piece with waiting, with the refusal to see what is there, with the fear of breaking into the present—in short, with the fear *of living*. To hope is to declare oneself in advance to be without any hold on that from which something is expected nonetheless. It's to remove oneself from the process so as to avoid any connection with its outcome. It's wanting things to be different without embracing the means for this to come about. It's a kind of cowardice. One has to know what to commit to and then commit to it. Even if it means making enemies. Or making friends. Once we know what we want, we're no longer alone, the world repopulates. Everywhere there are allies, closenesses, and an infinite gradation of possible friendships. Nothing is close for someone who floats. Hope, that very slight but constant *impetus toward tomorrow* that is communicated to us day by day, is the best agent of the maintenance of order. We're daily informed of problems we can do nothing about, but to which there will surely be solutions *tomorrow*. The whole oppressive feeling of powerlessness

that this social organization cultivates in everyone is only an immense pedagogy of waiting. It's an avoidance of now. But there isn't, there's never been, and there never will be anything but now. And even if the past can act upon the now, this is because it has itself never been anything but a now. Just as our tomorrow will be. The only way to understand something in the past is to understand that it too used to be a now. It's to feel the faint breath of the air in which the human beings of yesterday lived their lives. If we are so much inclined to flee from now, it's because now is the time of decision. It's the locus of the "I accept" or the "I refuse," of "I'll pass on that" or "I'll go with that." It's the locus of the logical act that immediately follows the perception. It is the present, and hence the locus of presence. It is the moment, endlessly renewed, of the taking of sides. Thinking in distant terms is always more comfortable. "In the end," things will change; "in the end," beings will be transfigured. Meanwhile, let's go on this way, let's remain what we are. A mind that thinks in terms of the future is incapable of acting in the present. It doesn't seek transformation; it avoids it. The current disaster is like a monstrous accumulation of all the deferrals of the past, to which are added those of each day and each moment, in a continuous time slide. But life is always decided now, and now, and now.

Everyone can see that this civilization is like a train rolling toward the abyss, and picking up speed. The faster it goes, the more one hears the hysterical cheers of the boozers in the discotheque car. You have to listen carefully to make out the paralyzed silence of the rational minds that no longer understand anything, that of the worriers who bite their nails, and the accent of false calm in the exclamations of the card players who wait. Inwardly, many people have chosen to leap off the train, but they hesitate on the footboard. They're still restrained by so many things. They feel held back because they've made the choice, but the decision is lacking. Decision is what traces in the present the manner and possibility of acting, of making a leap that is not into the void. We mean the decision to desert, to desert the ranks, to organize, to undertake a secession, be it imperceptibly, but in any case, *now*.

The epoch belongs to the determined.