

Love, Anti- (notes toward)

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I never made it to Love, and now I hear it's defunct. Anti-Love meets regularly, though attendance is spotty. At least I've done most of the readings. Love, by contrast, will be a recuperation project.

Anti-Love is not, to be fair, billed as Anti-Love. It's billed variously as resistance, revolt, revolution. Sometimes it's billed (tentatively or defiantly) as self-Love. Love bills itself as itself, eponymous and proud.

Without the beginning of the story, it's enough to know that there is a drafty corner apartment; an all-night bodega out the window; a playground across from the bodega, quiet at night. There is an abundance of emotion—enough years, enough fucks and near-fucks and pseudo-fucks, enough expectations unanswered because unheard or unsaid—and it is that abundance that is known: a *partial* knowing, as excess is always, paradoxically, partial. Without the beginning of the story, it is insufficient but still necessary to have a picture of the surround: not only the bodega and the playground, but the news reports filtering from the apartment below. The news reports appearing at the top right of the screen, a stack of small explosions, almost registering, then—impulsively—swiped away.

How are we to know who started things? The idea for Anti-Love came from me, I've been told, though I remember it as always having been there—not always, in the strict sense. It appeared when I needed it: an acquired taste. Tonight I met a man who was beautiful and tall, who wore capitalism like a well-fitting suit. Anti-Love recognized him, shone a light. For example.

Love was different. You think I don't have a story to tell. I was invited to Love. Like salt is invited to the early-winter road.

I don't have a story. I was invited, and I said *Yes*, I said *Send me the syllabus*, I said *I am only partially fluent in your language*. I was told I was welcome nonetheless. Meanwhile, the neighbors were setting each other on fire. California was also burning—actually burning. What were the neighbors doing, then? Setting themselves aflame, extracting the burrowed tick of love from one another's skin. I'm not being clear. Pappas and Stebelton met by accident, sat on the nearest stoop and pulled out their books of matches. For example. This is what it's come to. You don't have to believe me, but you can.

I don't know what you think. I can tell you about Porous and Anemone (all our names are borrowed, says Youssef Rakha, whom I'd like to meet though his book remains half-read on my floor—no time to read, certainly not enough). Porous and Anemone came together over a shared definition of the word 'expectation.' Anemone wanted things from Porous: a lack of friction mostly, but also small noises, an elbow extended into its vulnerability. Porous wanted everything to be decided (elbow in the ribs, far in). One day in the vestibule of one of their apartments, Porous had a change of opinion, which isn't the same as a change of heart. It ended there, Porous leaking predictable tears, Anemone predictably backing out the door.

When dawn lifts itself over the corner apartment, the bodega glows. The playground waits for its shower of light. Late risers don't know this, but there is always a moment, sometimes fleeting, when the clouds brim pink. In bed, angled toward windows, I wait for it. When there are no clouds, the pink separates itself onto puddles, passersby.

This month, while work has stopped through no fault of my own, while I need to conserve what little available funds I have, I will follow the syllabus of Love. I like to follow, but the syllabus has so many holes. In the beginning, I won't try to plug them. I can't make promises for the future (this being one of my failures both in and out of love).

I've fallen twice for philosophers. The first one studied a fascist—
still does. The second one studied, still studies, forms of love.

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* sets out in classic triangulation: (1) Preliminary Distinctions, (2) Love as Union, (3) Love as Robust Concern. I recognize, from my western philosophical formation, the triad of eros, agapé, philia. I absorbed it as lust, altruism, friendship, often wondering in the intervening years how much damage that taxonomy, trivialized by time and lack of attention, has done.

The first philosopher and I never recovered from a breach of trust. With the second, we succeeded in transforming eros to philia, or in finding the philia in eros, over time. I sent him the syllabus to Love and he sent it back from his university post, annotated and marked. Love, stained already by Authority, History, Trust.

I messaged the group: '*Loves*, though I haven't met all of you in person, I regret the demise of the IRL sessions. Btw, I shared the syllabus with my love philosopher, as suggested. Annotations forthcoming. Yours—E.' This missive earned one black heart from 'S,' one of the members I've never seen. I jolted when I saw their heart, then I liked it back.

