

Engaging Ferguson: An Affective Exploration of Uncivil Disobedience

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in Rhetoric Studies.

Whitman College
2017

Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Forrest J. Arnold has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Rhetoric Studies.

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December 2, 2016

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Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the guidance of Heather Hayes, Matthew Bost, Zahi Zalloua, Andrew Culp, and Kaitlyn Patia. I could not have completed it without the many discussions with Jess Faunt, Jesse Moneyhun, Peter Arnold, and Miles Libak. Last but not least, I am indebted to my surrogate family in Lyman House for their undying love and support.

Abstract

This essay analyzes the anarchist zine, *Dispatches from Ferguson Vol. 1* in order to expand the discourse theory of citizenship developed by Asen, and Rufo and Atchison. The conversation between these citizenship scholars provides a backdrop for an analysis of the intensely politicized activity depicted in the zine. Rather than consider actions such as looting and rioting within the discourse of criminality, foreclosing urgent conversations about the politics of social change, this essay considers them as affective modes of resistance that allow protesters to respond to oppression when other tactics have failed. The emotional language of the zine gestures towards the potential inherent in the escape of affect. This essay seeks to open new conversations surrounding the demonstrations in Ferguson and nuance our understanding of how citizenship is enacted and ultimately to answer the question: how can we understand uncivil disobedience as a form of public engagement?

KEYWORDS: Affect, Emotion, Citizenship, Public Engagement, Ferguson.

Engaging Ferguson

“The state of emergency is also always the state of emergence.”

– Claudia Rankine¹

The citizens of Ferguson declared a state of emergency in 2014 before the County government did. Following the death of Michael Brown there were candlelight vigils and peaceful marches in Ferguson. But people also rioted. They set fire to dumpsters and barricades. They threw Molotov cocktails, and threw back tear-gas canisters. They shut down traffic, violated curfew, and disregarded protest permits. They looted stores. In contrast, common protocol for conventional civil disobedience constrains protest to the liminal space just beyond the protest permit boundaries. Citizens practicing civil disobedience play with legal boundaries rather than break them, depend on the symbolic image-event of arrest, and above all maintain non-violent tactics. Given the failure of civil disobedience to account for activity in Ferguson, I sum up those actions instead as uncivil disobedience. I use uncivil disobedience as a descriptive term to encompass those acts of conventionally defined civil disobedience that evolved into something more. This is in part a statement on the fluidity of public protest, a lengthier discussion of which I will leave to the end of the piece. In the meantime, I align myself with Robert Asen’s conception of public engagement as a mode.² In this essay I seek to highlight one particular mode, characterized by its affective register and resistive purpose. Asen’s conception of citizenship entails the proper maintenance of a community, allowing for but not requiring resistance. I argue that citizenship within a community must entail resistance.

An affective mode of resistance is a method, unrestrained by signification, of challenging systems of oppressions. It is characterized by the failure of signification, which both raises the stakes and increases the potential for further resistance. The stakes are higher when aspects of those oppressive systems are also unbounded by signification. The potential for continued and varied resistance increases as we foreground forms of resistance that blur the line between signification and something else. Each aspect of the affective mode of resistance are made clear throughout this essay.

Among the multitudinous streams of discourse attempting to make sense of what happened in Ferguson, anarchist zines attempt to convey their anti-cop, anti-state perspective on the situation. One in particular, *Dispatches from Ferguson Vol. 1*, provides a sampling of that discourse since it collects multiple anonymous eye-witness accounts. Most importantly, the writers of the zine engage with the emotions and energy of the protesters in a way that directly gestures to the affective dimensions of the protest. I read the emotional language of the zine with an eye towards affect in order to reframe the uncivil disobedience in Ferguson as an affective mode of resistance. This reframing opens doors to a more diverse array of conversations about the scope of civic engagement.

In this essay I argue for an integration of affect theory into citizenship theory, and so I begin with a review of the relevant literature in each. I then outline the cultural milieu of Ferguson and situate the zine within it. From there I demonstrate the way that the emotional language of the zine gestures towards that affect which has escaped capture in expression, which provides an opportunity to explore the resistance

described in the zine as an affective mode. My exploration involves a discussion of the ways in which the zinesters engage the concepts of solidarity, community, and peace. Ultimately, I come to the conclusion that an affective focus must be added to the critical engagement of citizenship.

“Don’t let us say that was the end”: Ferguson in Context

Dispatches from Ferguson Vol. 1 is a zine that collects two personal, anonymous accounts of the demonstrations in Ferguson, MO, between August 11th and August 19th, 2014. As the first contributor to the zine puts it, “on the afternoon of Saturday, August 9th, 2014, an 18 year old, unarmed teenager named Mike ‘Mike Mike’ Brown was murdered by a Ferguson Police Department cop.”³ The common thread across multiple disputed narratives is that Brown was walking across the street when the cop, Darren Wilson, stopped him. After a physical confrontation, Brown runs away, stops, and turns around. At that point Wilson shoots Brown. Eyewitnesses report that Mike Brown turned around with his hands up, which the police dispute.⁴ Following Mike Brown’s death, his body remained uncovered, facedown in the street behind a police cordon for four hours.⁵

The events that unfolded following the shooting of Michael Brown are detailed in timelines posted by *The Washington Post*⁶ and *The New York Times*.⁷ *The New Yorker* asked “Why did Michael brown die in Ferguson?”⁸ and *CNN* published an article explaining “What we know about Michael Brown’s shooting.”⁹ Later in December, *USA Today* proclaims, “Ferguson struggles to grasp why protests turn violent.”¹⁰ Much of the mainstream coverage involves investigative journalism presenting “facts” from the shooting as though they were evidence submitted to a jury. Public controversy over the coverage of the events has led to self-reflective pieces like “How the Times Covered Ferguson,”¹¹ and “Black journalists tell how the year since Ferguson changed reporting.”¹² Meanwhile, cable news coverage covered the protests dramatically, focusing on the violence (or lack thereof).¹³

The zine was originally posted on a blog called “Ferguson and Further.” User limonata wrote in the first of only three posts on the blog, “This site intends to be a repository of resources for anti-police struggles in Ferguson, MO and beyond. While there have been many inspiring stories and pictures from Ferguson, there has been little in the way of printable materials made available to spread the news beyond the televisions and onto the streets of our own towns.”¹⁴ This blog was created in the aftermath of Michael Brown’s death and has not remained active in the past two years. The two stories within the zine were taken by limonata from antistatestl.noblogs.org, which is subtitled as “a clearinghouse for anti-capitalist news & analyses in metro St. Louis.”¹⁵ Anti-State STL has been operating as a hub of anarchist activity in St. Louis since October, 2011 and continues to organize actions against the police and local prisons. The forum started as “a warehouse for anti-capitalist // anti-state texts of leaflets, posters, and statements that have come from or are about OCCUPYSTL.”¹⁶ The forum is powered by noblogs.org, a “non commercial, antifascist, antisexist, privacy-oriented blog platform,”¹⁷ which is a project of Autistici/Inventati or A/I, a digital rights collective. “Individuals and collectives of the autonomous anticapitalist movement” formed A/I in 2001 to provide “activists, groups and collectives with platforms for a freer communication and digital tools for privacy self-defence.”¹⁸ A/I and noblogs.org (one of A/I’s many services or “digital tools”) appears to be European in origin. Their manifesto, for example, is available in Italian, English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portugese, and Catalan.¹⁹ The only contact information for Anti State STL is a riseup.net email, another privacy oriented communications service provider.²⁰ There is no biographical information about the founders of Anti State STL, nor about

limonata. The authors of each of the pieces in the zine are also anonymous, though they do reveal tidbits of their identity in their writing.

Inside the front cover of the zine is a disclaimer stating, “both texts in this piece were taken from antistatestl.noblogs.org, without permission but with endless love and solidarity.” Anti-State STL posted about the zine and made it available on their website on August 22nd, 2014, the day after it was posted on Ferguson and Further. Otherwise, the relationship between the two sites is unclear. Both stories retain the same titles as their original posts on the Anti-State STL forum. The text of the stories does not appear to be edited in any way, but the zine is composed with different photographs than the original posts. The zine came to me via a couple of Seattle based anarchists during a presentation on the history of policing at Whitman College. These anarchists had printed dozens of zines and pamphlets to distribute. I recognized some of the other literature they distributed from the “Anti-Cop Zines” page on the Ferguson and Further blog, indicating that the resources on that page are being distributed back on the streets in the way that the curators of the website explicitly intended.

The first story, titled “An Eye for an Eye Makes Our Masters Blind,” is dated August 8th, 2014.²¹ This first section introduces itself as “a compilation of first person accounts of the event,” signaling that there are multiple contributors. The first section is divided into three sub-sections by triple asterisks, which presumably demarcate different authors. The first and second contributors are distinguished by their separate arrivals on the scene in Ferguson, and they describe the impromptu protest that evolved from the candlelight vigil for Michael Brown on August 10th, 2014, down West Florissant Street. According to the zine, a constantly growing mass of people formed a

line against the “preemptive police presence” and made a show of force by shouting and throwing things. The third contributor picks up where the first and second leave off, and their writing comprise the majority of the first section of the zine. When the police moved to cover a different intersection, protesters began stomping on the passing police cars. Once the cops were gone, “the block was ours,” and rioting and looting began in the commercial district. People “attacked the QT,” one of the businesses rumored to have called the police on Michael Brown. It was “a full-on fucking riot.”²² The writer acknowledges their white identity in a slight aside, about halfway through the narrative:

I’ve definitely been in plenty of situations in my life where I was the only or one of the only white people in a group and been very aware that that’s who I was to the group. I didn’t get this feeling at all last night. Some white friends definitely had shit said to them or were threatened, but as far as I know nothing else happened.²³

Their identity is further complicated by their characterization of the local residents and the surrounding area. They write, “for once, the geography of this fucked up suburb was on *our* side,”²⁴ indicating some sort of attachment or familiarity with the local area, and including themselves in the “our” that could refer to the local populace. On the other hand, “our” in this case could simply refer to the rioters generally. Their conclusion also indicates that they may not be local. In the last three paragraphs, the author transitions from “we” to “they,” culminating in their conclusion: “The people of Ferguson were up all night: celebrating, getting revenge on the cops and the world *they’ve* been excluded from, getting the shit *they* needed to survive...”²⁵ Referring to “the people of Ferguson” as “they” could indicate that the author is not local. The images in this piece are blurry and posted without photo credit. The first is of a military

vehicle with a fire burning in the street behind it. The second photo is of a looter, carrying a bottle of alcohol through a broken store window.

The second story, “Ferguson. Over One Week In,” is dated August 19th, 2014.²⁶ The second section similarly introduces itself as “some observations from St Louis residents and participants in the struggle,” which indicates not only multiple contributors to the text but also that those contributors may or may not be local. The second section is divided into three topical subsections. The first subsection describes the aftermath of the initial protests and the continued looting. The next subsection of the piece is about respectability politics and the repression of violence by fellow protesters. The contributor explains the success of mainstream media and social media in dividing the protesters, but also claims that they “aren’t having as much success on W. Florissant.” After the discussion of the ways that race, gender and age are uniting or dividing the protesters, the third subsection claims that the activity in Ferguson has gone beyond the protestation of one extrajudicial killing: “we are doing this for ourselves, our friends and family, as well as Mike Brown.” There are two pictures of higher quality than in the first piece. The first is of a group of masked black men lighting Molotov cocktails. The second is of a plainly uniformed police officer walking at the head of a crowd of peaceful protesters.

Journalists have also provided an alternative view of the Ferguson unrest. “In Defense of the Ferguson Riots,”²⁷ published on Jacobin on August 14th, 2014 is a short piece positing that the riots are not irrational or apolitical. On November 25th, 2014, TIME published an article titled “Ferguson: In Defense of Rioting,”²⁸ which outlines a history of rioting in the U.S. and claims the riot as “part of the American experience.”

“The Poor Person’s Defense of Riots,”²⁹ was published on Counterpunch on December 26th, 2014. Author Delio Vasquez opposes the justification of rioters emotional outbursts, and instead argues that there can be mob decision making towards a political goal. Together these authors defend the rioting in Ferguson from the perspective of political utility. In contrast to the journalistic endeavor of collecting the “facts” of the “case,” or the op-ed style defenses aligned with one political project or another, I seek to assess the affective elements of citizenship and resistance in the pursuit of better tools to both engage citizenship as an idea and enact it as a way of being. In the following section I outline the critical voices I engage to perform this assessment.

Affect and Public Engagement in the Era of Ferguson

In assessing the academic conversation surrounding my project, I review the discipline's treatment of Ferguson as a site of discourse and zines as a medium. I then review the debate over the discourse theory of citizenship. Finally, I explore pieces of affect theory relevant to rhetoric studies, with the particular intention of importing affect into the discourse theory of citizenship.

First and foremost, the narratives in *Dispatches from Ferguson* happen in Ferguson, in 2014, within demonstrations that have already been analyzed in rhetorical studies from different perspectives. Jackson and Welles (2016) examine the #Ferguson counterpublic that arose on social media immediately after the murder of Michael Brown.³⁰ Stephen Underhill (2016) recently approached the political rhetoric of the policing of Ferguson with an institutional critique. Underhill argues that Ferguson law enforcement view the suburb as an urban jungle that must be “contained or colonized.”³¹ In contrast to Underhill's approach, my project pursues an analysis of vernacular rhetoric.³²

Many disciplines have analyzed zines since their emergent popularity in the 1990s, but Duncombe³³ and Piepmeier³⁴ provide helpful histories of the zine. Dan Brouwer (2005) has examined the constitution of counterpublics in two HIV/AIDS zine. Importantly for my project, this work also focuses on the corporeality of the zines and gives a word of warning against “presumptions of liberatory...effects of counterpublic discourse.”³⁵ Brouwer, with Licona (2016), also has discussed the process of digitizing queer and POC zines.³⁶ Chidgey, Payne, and Zobl (2009) have examined feminist zines as an alternative “rhizomatic” media form for community

building.³⁷ Jeppeson (2010) has discussed anarchist zines as alternative media in opposition to mainstream media.³⁸ In addition to being anonymous and overtly anarchist, my and Jeppeson's artifacts can be seen as an attempt to circulate an alternative discourse to the mainstream media. Throughout this literature, zines are analyzed based on their function in creating alternative spaces or communities through discourse. How then, do zines interact with civic engagement? In order to answer this question, I turn to citizenship theory to address how zines might function as a tool of public engagement.

Robert Asen (2004) set a new bar for the treatment of citizenship theory in rhetorical studies. His work lays out a new way of conceptualizing citizenship "as a *mode of public engagement*."³⁹ Asen chooses to situate his theory within the project of public subjectivity, building on public sphere scholarship: "Asking questions of public subjectivity presents the larger conceptual landscape of which a discourse theory of citizenship is only one part."⁴⁰ The backdrop of public subjectivity delimits his project by acknowledging that other conceptions of public subjectivity are distinct and important in different ways. Asen argues for a theory of citizenship that "recognizes the fluid, multimodal, and quotidian enactments of citizenship in a multiple public sphere."⁴¹ This means that citizenship engagement is not restricted to certain prescribed acts. In particular, Asen writes that such a mode "cannot be contained easily," and "is potentially unruly."⁴² In outlining the importance of citizenship as a mode, Asen claims that democracy "cannot be empirically verified," it rather "requires a *leap* of faith."⁴³ In his conclusion, Asen highlights an expansive definition of discourse "that involves other modes of symbolic expression."⁴⁴ This expanded definition is key for analyzing

the discourse of Ferguson. The final takeaway for civic engagement scholarship is that “assessing the vibrancy of civic engagement depends in part on where one looks,” and we can recognize a new kind of vibrancy by “recast[ing] nonpolitical activities as political.”⁴⁵ My project ultimately aims to elucidate a new kind of vibrancy of public engagement.

Other rhetorical scholars have taken up this project. Cisneros (2014) approaches Asen’s work by examining the ways Latino/a communities “have contributed to and contested dominant understandings of borders and citizenship.” Cisneros’ question in examining Latino/a vernacular discourses is: “what kinds of citizenship are discursively enacted and how?”⁴⁶ Rufo and Atchison (2011), on the other hand, take issue with Asen’s reframing of the political. They accuse Asen of “push[ing] the political to such an extreme that the term takes on a coercive hegemonic status.”⁴⁷ In laying the groundwork for their claim, they review the appearance of the citizen in rhetorical studies and point out that it appears “as a foil to the government,” and argue for an understanding of the citizen as “epiphenomenal,” or in other words, “the political body produces the individual citizen as a function of its own incompleteness.”⁴⁸ Rufo and Atchison ultimately call for an inquiry “into a way of living, a being-with of community that is, strictly speaking, not political.”⁴⁹ I find community to ultimately be a useful mediating term between Rufo and Atchison, and Asen, but also between Asen and anarchism. Despite Rufo and Atchison’s critique that Asen does damage to the concept of community by over-politicizing it, Asen is not willing to give up on community. In fact, that is why he politicizes the being-with of community. Anarchism

may be willing to accept material and symbolic damage to community as collateral damage in order to destroy the state, but Asen is not and neither am I.

Affect theory provides the entry point in this conversation as a mode of assessing a political way of living. Jenny Edbauer Rice outlines four intersections between critical affect studies and rhetoric studies, arguing moreover that “affect is worth our time and attention” as rhetorical scholars.⁵⁰ I return to the intersection of rhetoric and affect after a discussion of the affect theory I find most pertinent.

In this work, I will draw extensively from the work of Brian Massumi. Clare Hemmings (2005) helpfully outlines problems facing affect theorists raised by the deconstructive turn, one of which is the failure of “constructivist models of the subject to account fully for our place in the world.”⁵² Brian Massumi responded to this problem clearly, even in the title of his 1995 work, “The Autonomy of Affect,” by theorizing affect as autonomous from and almost transcendent beyond social signification.⁵³ Similarly, Sedgwick describes the “freedom of affect” that correlates to an attitude of cultural criticism freed from the random social frameworks to which affect is attached.⁵⁴ Hemmings’ intervention is to demonstrate the utility of affect, by placing it “in the context of social narratives and power relations.” It is thus “valuable precisely to the extent that it is not autonomous,”⁵⁵ rather than the other way around. By grounding my analysis in (one of) the social narratives from Ferguson I seek to follow the spirit of Hemmings project.

Ultimately I return to Massumi’s binary distinctions, only to the degree that they are helpful, in order to find a meaningful way forward for bringing affect into citizenship theory. Massumi theorizes affect through binaries. He writes “affects are

virtual synaesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing particular things that embody them.”⁵⁶ This means that affect does not originate in actual particularity, but is constrained by it. Here Massumi establishes the relationship between the virtual and the actual. The virtual refers to “the pressing crowd of incipencies and tendencies,”⁵⁷ which can be categorized as potential. The actual is simply the expression of whichever potential is drawn from the crowd.⁵⁸ Massumi calls this process “the *capture* and closure of affect,”⁵⁹ which necessarily entails “the fact that something has always and again *escaped*.”⁶⁰ I rely on this final binary in order to read the relationship between affect and signified expression in the zine.

Lauren Berlant discusses the affective characteristics of attachment in her book *Cruel Optimism* (2011), which can elucidate the ways in which the zinesters navigate relations with political situations. She writes “affective atmospheres are shared, not solitary, and that bodies are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to the atmospheres in which they find themselves.”⁶¹ Berlant’s aim in writing about these atmospheres and the way we interact with them is to elucidate a specific relation she calls cruel optimism, which “exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing.”⁶² My project deals with the particular relation that occurs “when, despite an awareness that the normative political sphere appears as shrunken, broken, or distant place of activity among elites, members of the body politic return periodically to its recommitment ceremonies and scenes.”⁶³ The conclusions of my analysis will deal with how protesters in Ferguson may have been acting to break out of such a cruel relation.

In order to both globalize affect across a community or space and parse out the effects of affect discussed above, I turn to Catherine Chaput's conception of rhetorical articulation in relation to affective energy. Chaput (2010) seeks to elucidate the new meaning of rhetorical circulation and production in the spaces of neoliberalism. According to Chaput, rhetorical circulation ultimately "functions through constant motion in multiple exchanges throughout an evolving ecological space of signifying and becoming."⁶⁴ She goes on to summarize this as a "dynamic affective space,"⁶⁵ within which we might understand Berlant's atmospheres to be floating. To understand Ferguson as just such a dynamic and affective space means to look collectively at the communicative exchanges between bodies in Ferguson, and furthermore to grapple with the intermingling of complex and competing affective states. In the following chapter I seek to ground my affective analysis of the zine in the cultural milieu of Ferguson in order to discover the value of affect to a reinvigorated discourse theory of citizenship.

Ferguson as a Site of Affective Potential

I center my reading of the zine on three themes: emotion, solidarity, and criminality. The following sections develop each of these themes. Massumi's distinction between capture and escape returns to the fore in order to thoroughly read the emotional language of the zine, and assess the way it functions affectively. Ultimately, my assessment leaves Massumi's binary behind for a nuanced perspective that is centered, but not reliant on, signification. The following step requires an assessment of solidarity – where it works and where it breaks down, and why. Finally, I analyze the zine's place among a broader discourse that views the situations surrounding uncivil disobedience in terms of criminality. I find that civility and criminality cannot be disentangled in any affectively focused discussion of protest.

Emotional Mixture

Throughout the zine, the anarchist authors describe the emotional atmosphere of Ferguson with a confused mixture of often contradictory emotions. The opening narrative mixes together grief and anger in order to point towards the un-captured dimensions of affective potential. The first contributor describes the people at the first candlelight vigil for Mike Brown as “mourners.”⁶⁶ Immediately they articulate themselves in contrast to this passive subjectivity in their description of the second candlelight vigil. At the intersection leading towards the apartment complex where the vigil was being held (and where Mike Brown was killed), the zinester and their friends stopped and started blasting Lil Boosie. Then “the crowd went wild,” but there were

also folks that thought it was “stirring things up too much.”⁶⁷ The music appears at the very beginning of the zine, as an opening quote that channels anger towards law enforcement: “City – fuck ‘em / Narcotics – fuck ‘em / Feds – fuck ‘em / D.A. – fuck ‘em.”⁶⁸ Lil’ Boosie lists various forms of law enforcement and repeats the same epithet for each. This repetition demonstrates the comprehensive rejection of the police. On one hand, the music could work to intensify the affective states already present. In a crowd of “mourners” the musical rage expresses, or to use Massumi’s language, captures a different affect than is expressed in the air of the crowd.⁶⁹ This in turn could open up more resistive potential by capturing and intensifying a different affect than the one shared by those concerned the music was stirring things up. On the other hand, the selection and expression of this particular captured affect leaves a huge remainder. The solemn grief of the mourners and Lil’ Boosie’s rage mixed in the air as two points of affective capture.

The second and third contributors continue the narrative and focus on the police presence, mixing in fear with anger as the situation escalates. They say “some friends were so deeply disturbed by the amount of police that they had to leave early,” and they further characterize that reaction as fear.⁷⁰ The third contributor picks up where the second leaves off temporally, focusing on the formation of the crowd in relation to the intermingling of fear and anger. According to the zine, there were “fears of more police violence” from some, but the majority of people constituted the “angry line.”⁷¹ This means that according to the zinester, there were two somewhat distinct groups of people in the crowd, those who were fearful and those who were angry. The complex and ambiguous reasons cited for that fear by the second contributor complicate that

distinction. Friends of the authors wanted to participate in the vigil – and whatever it would evolve into – because of their grief or their anger, or perhaps for a wider range of emotions unable to be fully accounted for in the zinester’s description. Overall, the “emotions of The People intensified,”⁷² which is a direct indicator of the inability to adequately signify the affective energies circulating at the demonstration. There were so many points of capture that the zinester has difficulty parsing them out.

Hatred becomes the common expression that effectively mediates anger and fear. The zine continues to intermingle the expressions of anger and fear leading up to and continuing through the enactment of violence. Fear does not simply give way to anger once people become violent. The zinester describes interactions with fellow protesters that are “super upset” about the violence. The distress over the violence is characterized not as an ethical objection but rather “out of fear” of further violence.⁷³ In these confrontations between fear and anger, the mutual hatred of police settled the dispute and maintained the common respect of the protesters. The zinester says: “by the end of a conversation even if we still didn’t agree it was clear we respected each other. I made sure to say ‘But fuck them, right?’ and motion to the police and everyone quickly agreed...so much camaraderie in the street last night.”⁷⁴

By the time looting breaks out, festivity and celebration complicates the intermingling emotional expressions circulating among the protesters. “The energy in the streets was both angry and festive.”⁷⁵ Here again complex and logically competing emotional expressions intermingle in the crowd as characterized by the zine. People looted the resources “they needed to survive,” but also “other things they needed to celebrate.” Survival and celebration are directly intertwined here. In the previous case,

the zinester is explicitly addressing the energy of the crowd. They attempt to signify the multiple and competing capture of affect. In the second case, the zinester is implicitly attempting to signify the energy of the looted objects. The different objects are indeed materially distinct but the zinester mixes them all together later in their writing: “we could get rims, weaves, shoes, toilet paper, motor oil, car batteries, school lunches or anything else to make life more comfortable.”⁷⁶ One might be able to distinguish between the commodities that a person needs to survive from those that could be simply desired, but here the zinester mixes together need, survival, celebration, and comfort.

The zine also highlights the intermingling of anger and celebration in the narration of the looting. The initiation of looting as described by the zine centers around the QT, “one of two places rumored to have called the police on Mike Mike” (a local nickname for Michael Brown). The attack on the QT began as a distraction from “a run at the police,”⁷⁷ portrayed here as a non-conscious decision brought about by competing affective stimuli. In that moment, the anger at the QT for calling the cops, for getting Mike Mike killed, for “employ[ing] them in meaningless jobs, and for “hold[ing] captive the resources they need,”⁷⁸ outweighed the anger at the police. This is not to say that the anger at the police was gone or replaced, rather it was ever present. The zine presents the looting of the QT as a different expression of anger, another point of capture of otherwise complex affective potential. Furthermore, the protesters complimented the looting by tagging the QT with “snitches,” “RIP Mike Mike,” and “187 County Police.”⁷⁹ This indicates that the anger at the police and the QT were intertwined. The material difference between a phone call and a gunshot

blurred together as the expressions of rage against the QT and the police intermingled and competed.

The zinester's language demonstrates the way affect cannot be signified. Either the third contributor or the editor concludes the first half of the zine with a string of action-verb focused summations:

This is where our narrative ends, but don't let us say that was the end. The people of Ferguson were up all night: celebrating, getting revenge on the cops and the world they've been excluded from, getting the shit they need to survive, destroying rich people's shit for fun, telling stories and wilin' out.⁸⁰

The string of phrases mixes together temporality and affective dimensions to the best ability that language can allow. The list of emotionally based actions does its best not to distinguish one from the next. "For fun" and "to survive" are grammatically paralleled. "Celebrating" and "destroying" are presented in the same form, and "getting revenge" and "telling stories" are similarly paralleled. The confusion of grammar does not indicate a necessitated distinct treatment of each expression, but rather the inability of signification to properly account for the simultaneous capture and escape of affect.]

Solidarity and Invitation

The zinesters attempt to build solidarity throughout the zine with their emotional language. On the first page, they refer to "Mike 'Mike Mike' Brown," and then continue to use this more personal nickname throughout the first half of the zine. The authors of the first half build on this empathetic relationship and establish a local persona in solidarity with the people of Ferguson, and of course Mike Mike. The more personal language compliments the empathetic tone. The zinesters are understanding of

their friends that wanted to be in the streets but could not be there because they were afraid of the police. The successful appeals to empathy in building solidarity contrast with the treatment of peaceful protesters and the media in the second section.

The authors of the second half of the zine are much less concerned with building community or solidarity with peaceful protesters. In their discussion of how various organizations and institutions repressed the uprising, the authors hint that Nation of Islam and the New Black Panther Party both view black protesters as “exploitable.”⁸¹ They make this haphazard comment in trying to make sense of the “conspiracy theory bullshit” that “white agitators...are tricking black protesters into going on the attack.”⁸² Ultimately, the anarchists are explicitly trying to advocate for their “black comrades who’re grown enough to make decisions for themselves,” women who deserve to be on the front lines despite “patriarchal attempts to divide the protests”, and the young voices resisting the “paternalistic aura of authority” among older peaceful protesters.⁸³ Despite their attempt to critically engage the divisions in protesters that they see happening, the authors fail to build solidarity in the same way that the authors of the first half of the zine did.

In order to make sense of why the zinesters abandon solidarity in this way, I turn to a brief analysis of the optimistic attachment to peaceful political protest. The anarchists write that “the authorities engaged in some good cop/bad cop” by assigning Ron Johnson, a black police officer who grew up in the area, to head the police operations in Ferguson. As a result, the “protest leaders openly work[ed] with the Johnson to control the crowds.”⁸⁴ The anarchists do not simply deride Johnson’s actions as a publicity stunt or self-aggrandizement. They instead describe the concerted

collaboration in terms of an interrogation tactic. The authors characterize civil collaboration between police and protesters as directly counterproductive to their goals. Thus the zinesters rejection of collaborating with the police constitutes a rejection of the optimistic attachment to civil politics.

The second section concludes with a gesture towards the escape of affect similar to the conclusion of the first half. This author attempts to sum up the situation with a string of nouns: “the ‘peace’ you are continuously urged to return to looks like powerlessness, humiliation, poverty, boredom, and violence.”⁸⁵ Each noun standing in for “peace” is thus paralleled. Humiliation and powerlessness seem to go hand in hand logically – each could be seen to follow from the other. There is also a clear link between poverty as a sort of violence, while also involving many kinds of violence. Boredom, however, is not clearly or logically linked to any of the other nouns, except perhaps the original, peace. The ambiguous parallelism further demonstrates the failure of signification. The incongruence within the list shows that this failure is not an attempt to perfectly signify one emotional expression, but rather it is an attempt to signify the multiplicity of expressions. It shows that there are a multitude of expressions capturing affective energy, yet so much of that energy escapes.

Throughout the zine there are breaks in the narrative format when the zinesters invite the reader to participate. In the second paragraph on the first page, they write “this is not the only account of what happened. If you were there last night, tell your own story.” Then the authors provide two concrete ways of telling that story: “share it with friends and send it to antistatestl@riseup.net.”⁸⁶ Both options are equally important to the zinesters, because ultimately sending stories to the anonymous forum

is just another way of sharing with friends. The express purpose of the forum is to increase communication between anarchists, rather than simply spread the word or raise awareness. The zinesters' invitation to share is predicated on the reader having a story, and therefore having been a participant in the streets of Ferguson. The implicit assumption of the reader's activity does not limit the audience but rather acts as a supplementary invitation to get involved if you have not already, in addition to the community they are building for those who have participated.

Expectation and surprise mix together in the narrative breaks to indicate the potential in the situation. The zinesters again break into the second person when they first address possible expectations of how events like Ferguson might unfold. "You might be expecting that the crowd of attackers to have been young men in their early 20's or teens, but definitely that was not the case." After describing the crowd as "all genders and all ages" they conclude that it was "fucking surreal."⁸⁷ Expectations are explicitly shattered. Towards the end of the zine, the authors write, "two weeks ago this whole thing would have been unthinkable."⁸⁸ They could not have expected the uncivil disobedience to reach the point that it did. The final sentence in the zine sends a different sort of invitation, and concretizes the idea that expectations were exceeded. "And so we raise a shot of looted gin – A TOAST! May we continue to surprise each other."⁸⁹ Collectively, the writers of the zine were surprised. They had certain expectations about the degree to which the uncivil disobedience and resistance would reach, and they write as though that resistance burst beyond those expectations. The excess of affect and the excess over political expectation are paralleled here. As the zinesters were shocked by the intensity of their fellow protester's activity, the

intensity of affect was heightened as well. The parallel is signaled by the invitation itself. With a glimpse of the affective potential present in Ferguson, the anarchists are eager to continue surprising each other, exceeding political expectations, and circulating affects that exceed possible points of capture.

Inverting the Discourse of Criminality

The zinesters complicate the relationship between criminality and justice. In the first page alone they refer to the murder of Mike Brown three times, establishing the police as the true criminals in this situation.⁹⁰ Later the zinesters claim, “the police have a long list of *accomplices*,” to help divide the protesters.⁹¹ As opposed to the use of murder, the use of accomplices here does not connect to anything that could be a crime under the law as it stands. Instead, the zinesters use this language in order to further characterize the cops as the true criminals in an abstract sense. The zinesters make it clear in the conclusion of the second half that they are not looking for so-called “justice,” at least not in the sense of holding criminals accountable. “To us, the struggle is not limited to justice for Mike Brown and the conviction of a single cop of murder in a court of law.”⁹² Instead, they seek justice for all oppressed people and therefore the conviction of the entire system: “we’ve already found this system *guilty*.”⁹³ The zinesters simply expand the notion of criminality and turn it around on the institutions that hold power over what it means.

Although they seem to be self-conscious of it, the authors of the zine perpetuate a binary understanding of uncivil disobedience based on crime. They refer to “protester vs criminal” as one of “the time-tested dichotomies” that police used to divide the

protesters in Ferguson, implying that the distinction is a distraction from the real work of resistance. At the very least, pointing out this dichotomy demonstrates how evaluations of protesters are often laden with implicit value judgments based on civility. One can only be a good or true protester if one stays within the boundaries of civil disobedience.

The recent social media coverage of uncivil disobedience against Trump's presidential victory provide a mine of examples of the dichotomization between criminal elements and true protesters. Just two days after the election, as protests began to gain momentum, the Portland police department tweeted "[m]any in crowd trying to get anarchist groups to stop destroying property, anarchists refusing. Others encouraged to leave area."⁹⁴ They distinguished crime from protest. This declaration from police should not be surprising given their role as law enforcement. These tweets were picked up in major media outlet coverage of the Portland riots such as NPR,⁹⁵ Al Jazeera,⁹⁶ and USA Today,⁹⁷ who all quoted from the Portland Police twitter account. The response from local residents such as one tweet, "@PortlandPolice Thank you so much for taking the time to distinguish these two groups as you work to protect your city,"⁹⁸ also show an adherence not only to law and order but to the dichotomy between protesters and mere criminals.

A purely affective analysis of the zine might come to the dismissive conclusion that the discourse fails to convey the complex affective potential at work in Ferguson. As Massumi says, "the limits of the field of emergence are in its actual expression."⁹⁹ The signification of emotion (expression) in the zine delimits the field of affect (emergence). From a rhetorical perspective, the failure itself gestures towards the

affective potential. In every case of emotional expression throughout the zine, the non-rational intermingling is highlighted. It is a gesture to that affective remainder which has escaped. It points hopefully towards an ever-expanding realm of potential for further resistance. I turn finally to a discussion of the ramifications that gesture and that potential have for approaching public engagement, and more broadly the consequences of this discussion for the way we understand uncivil disobedience.

Engaging (in) Affective Resistance

This essay shows the affective functioning of a particular sample of discourse around Ferguson. Through an analysis of the emotional language, moments of solidarity and invitation, and the discourse of criminality in the zine, I have outlined an opportunity to explore new forms of public engagement from Ferguson. An affective mode of resistance, rather than a purely cognitive mode, encompasses this exploration. Considering public engagement through an affective register provides the ground for new conversations both in how to enact public engagement and also how to critically engage public engagement.

The discourse theory of citizenship must be updated to incorporate an attention to affect. Asen's proposed list of five foci for critically engaging citizenship is the best place to continue this conversation. He proposes a consideration of "how citizenship engagement proceeds generatively, exhibits risk, affirms commitment, expresses creativity, and fosters sociability."¹⁰⁰ In particular, the focus on creativity in public engagement could be seen to be doing the same work as an affective mode. First and most apparent, Asen characterizes the focal point of creativity as a way to interpret "clever and silly" enactments of public engagement, in contrast to the stereotypically "somber or solemn action."¹⁰¹ My analysis points to the disruption of this distinction entirely, by demonstrating the ways that affective resistance blends together emotional expressions. Second and most important, creativity points in the direction of emotion and thus affect, but is never the less bound to signification. Affect we know is beyond the realm of signification, and furthermore an affective mode of resistance blurs the line between the signified and that which cannot be signified. Grappling with the limits

of signification opens avenues to consider potential new enactments of citizenship. I propose affect as a sixth focal point for engaging public engagement.

As I have hoped to make clear, affects cannot be deployed in a similar way to how we consider discursive practices or processes. We cannot simply tame affect by assigning political emotions to rational cognition. I do not mean to say that the affective mode of resistance is purely subconscious and therefore out of purposeful reach. Instead we can rely on Deborah Gould's distinction between the "irrational" and "nonrational."¹⁰² Approaching public engagement in search of affective modes empowers political discussion to move beyond the binary of rationality, in order to reconcile differences in tactical approaches to resistance. This approach involves empathizing with political feelings that are not our own.

Framing uncivil disobedience as an affective mode of resistance also allows political agents to consider the ethical implications of otherwise criminal acts. Looting, rioting, and generally violence are crimes that you can be charged with. The anarchist zinesters would applaud you. They tell you how to do it and not get caught, and how your crime against the state is a political act of resistance. The state would stop you, and in your indictment or obituary explain how that crime undermines our democratic society. Considering those acts within an affective mode of resistance moves this conversation beyond the binary of criminality. In short, affect provides the opportunity to disobey – to resist – and find public meaning for that disobedience in the pursuit of community.

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