

Introduction

Between Friends



Hervé Guibert, “*Lami*,” 1980.

The philosopher is the concept’s friend; he is potentiality of the concept. . . . Does this mean that the friend is the friend of his own creations? Or is the actuality of the concept due to the potential of the friend, in the unity of the creator and his double?

—*Deleuze and Guattari* (What is Philosophy? 5)

A concept is created in the intellectual interstices of two philosophers, two friends. It is not rightfully *their* concept, of course; it is, as Deleuze and Guattari note, their friend, the doubling (even quadrupling) of their friendship. The property of neither, the potentiality of both, the concept emerges as a third term between two. Its arrival enacts the principal features of its conceptual persona: the relational terms of a lived friendship

and the theoretical implications of each thinker's work on friendship are actualized in this event. It is thus a singular concept generated in common; this in itself is its purpose, its *raison d'être*. Although the result of a profound intimacy (between thinkers and thought, between individuals), it resists assimilating its originary differences into an identity. It holds these friends at remove, in suspension, nurturing and continuously soliciting their individual and shared power. As such, this concept of friendship bears the imprint of a historical relationship yet points toward a posthumous political project with a life of its own. Michel Foucault provides the textual components, Hervé Guibert the visual, and I venture a name: friendship as shared estrangement.¹

The title of this book, respectfully borrowed from a 1981 Foucault interview of the same name, and the photograph gracing the cover, Hervé Guibert's "*Lami*" (1980), perhaps say as much about this concept of friendship as the words contained herein. Although each thinker certainly offers a unique understanding of friendship, I am interested here in articulating a concept that emerges in between. In terms of the physical space of this book's cover, then, I suppose I am charting the territory amid the title and the photo, creating overlays and drawing form lines to make legible and navigable that fertile zone between two oeuvres. In that common space lies this book's primary concept, friendship as shared estrangement. In that common space the concept's very formulation enacts its political strategy. Friendship as shared estrangement is a communal invention (of Foucault and Guibert, between myself and the two, and, most importantly, as I argue, among caregivers, activists, and Persons with AIDS [PWAs] throughout the AIDS crisis), dead set against the privatization of its constituent excesses. It is political by its very nature and it points to a sexual politics quite different from what we know today as "gay rights." What follows, then, is not only an attempt to chart the conceptual terrain between two thinkers, but to read the resulting map so as to forge a course out of the quagmire of sexuality, sexual identity, and contemporary sexual politics.

As the bulk of these pages is devoted to close analyses of Foucault's late work, I wish to begin my exploration of friendship as shared estrangement by giving Guibert's photography its due. "*Lami*" is one of Guibert's most renowned photos, anthologized many times over and used as cover art for a number of books, including the Gallimard collection of his photography.² It welcomed visitors into the Galerie Agathe Gaillard in 1984, where Guibert exhibited the series that would become his first book of photography, *Le seul visage*. It is the first photo in that book.³ As such, "*Lami*" is in many respects representative of Guibert's visual style and bears some of its hallmarks: black-and-white stock, subject-

centered, self-inclusive, with strong emphasis on the interplay of shadow and light, blurry and focused surfaces. Although both figures in the photo are faceless and fragmented, we can surmise from biographical and textual context that the hand belongs to Guibert and the chest to one of his closest confidants/lovers, Thierry.⁴ Compositionally, Guibert's arm juts into the photographic space from the bottom-left corner. His hand touches the sternum of Thierry, whose bare chest and shoulders dominate the frame. With the exception of Thierry's right pectoral, each element is out of focus, fuzzy, lending a dreamy if not spectral quality to the shot. Darkness threatens to engulf Thierry from his left: In certain spots he is nearly indistinct from the wall behind, his left bicep and pectoral barely visible at all. Although this shadowy figure is a forceful and ominous presence, he is simultaneously motionless, passive, even vulnerable. Guibert's more brightly lit hand, the photo's (just-left-of-) centerpiece, is similarly multivalent: Is it actively pushing Thierry away? Is it restraining him from moving closer? Is it supporting a forward-leaning body? Or, is it gently caressing Thierry, touching him where love "resides"? Like Thierry's presence, the meaning of Guibert's gesture is ambiguous. In view of that, and taking into account the title of the piece, what type of friend and what form of friendship is offered here?

One might be, and many have been, tempted to read this image as specifically and politically "gay." Given the historical context of gay liberation, the fact that Guibert self-identified as homosexual, and the assimilationist political desire to identify and collect "positive images" of homosexuality, such an interpretation is reasonable, if reductive.⁵ Even if we accept that this text has something to do with "being gay," even if the subjects are in fact Guibert and Thierry, and, forgetting names, dates and biographies for the moment, even if the extended arm is in fact attached to a male body, the photo remains a quite peculiar, a not unequivocally "positive" display of homoeroticism.⁶ The hand gesture, for starters, communicates a number of conflicting messages: (1) "STOP! Stay where you are; don't come any closer" in the language of the traffic cop (or even "in the name of love," à la Diana Ross and the Supremes); (2) "Don't go, please stay, I want you here" in the language of the lover; and (3) "Leave me alone, goodbye" or, anachronistically, "talk to the hand," in the language of the departing and/or dismissing. Indeed, as noted earlier, the gesture is simultaneously tender and commanding, accommodating and rejecting; the hand pushes, restrains, supports, and caresses. To build the mystery further, it remains unclear to which figure the title refers: Is the singular friend the restrainer or the restrained, the toucher or the touched? Is the title itself an abbreviated, perhaps coded, reference to "boyfriend" (*un petit ami*)? Although we can be certain that

this is a male friend (*Lami*, not *Lamie*), we cannot say without doubt that *the* friend is Thierry (who is the named subject of other portraits titled “Thierry, 1979” and “T., 1976”), as it may well be Guibert himself. For these reasons, the photo demands an interpretation beyond the details of biography, history, and sexual identity. For all of its ambiguity, I assert that this text is not merely photographic evidence of a lived friendship, but, rather, an early attempt by Guibert to articulate a concept of friendship as shared estrangement—a concept he will elaborate a decade later in his fictionalized AIDS memoir, *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*.

Thus, if we understand this photo not only as a representation of a singular friend but also as a nascent theory of friendship itself, four facets of this theory are immediately evident: friendship involves a relation between one and another (or between one and oneself), anonymity, bodily contact, and, somewhat paradoxically, physical distance. The friend is held at arm’s length, refused a certain access to the other; yet the gesture that separates simultaneously unites.⁷ The touch, the lighting, the closed framing, and the softened edges of body parts all work to create a tenderly lurid atmosphere, suggesting, as some critics would have it, a postcoital, preparting moment in a romantic narrative.⁸ The arguably forceful hand gesture, however, complicates this narrative by calling attention to the discrete boundaries and willed movements of each character. The existential push and pull of individuality versus community is possibly at play here; friendship, not necessarily romance, becomes the stage on which this drama is enacted. But *Tristan und Isolde* this is not. Rather than a fusing of body and soul, we have here an intimacy that resists amalgamation—a seemingly *impersonal* intimacy that comprehends, perhaps counterintuitively, a sensual component. The nameless, fragmented, even abstracted bodies seem more at home in a Kenneth Anger film than in a Wagner opera, their intimacy more akin to the Judas kiss of betrayal than a love beyond the grave.⁹ The subjects’ lack of features heightens the impersonality of the scene: we see merely gestures and postures, no facial expressions, no windows to the soul. These could be any bodies whatever, any two pale-skinned men in any interior space. The scene is rife with potentiality, uncertainty—anything could have happened, could be happening, could happen; its polyvalence confounds. We are, however, guided by the title to “*the* friend,” or, the more comprehensive, “friend”: This is not simply *a* friend (*un ami*) but either a specific one or the very idea of “friend” itself. If we take seriously the latter interpretation, as I clearly do, we have already a preliminary definition of Guibertian friendship: a complex, even contradictory, relation involving attraction and resistance, intimacy and separation, sensuality and

frigidity; a relation that resists dialectical fusion in favor of nondialectical mingling; a friendship that by no means excludes the sensual but remains, perhaps, indifferent to the sexual.

To more clearly explicate this last claim, it is important to note that the photo's sensuality does not immediately translate to sexuality, especially in its antinomial modern conception. Granted, one clothed, seemingly male arm touches another man's bare chest, but in the semiotics of contemporary erotic gestures, this hardly constitutes "homosexuality." Again, it is by and large the biographical, historical, and textual context that urges us to interpret the photo as specifically "gay." If we allow it to read more openly, we see instead what Ralph Sarkonak has designated Guibert's "sensuality of surfaces," a sensuality "not lodged in the muscle tissue beneath the skin, in the rock hard flesh that seeks to force its way out . . . [but, instead] . . . located in the touch and the feel of the body's outer envelope" ("Traces and Shadows" 187). The faceless anonymity of the figures adds force to an interpretation that emphasizes surface. If this photo concerns homosexuality at all, then, sexual "depth" is hardly at issue. Countering the biopolitical demand to understand sexuality as the inner locus of self-truth, Guibert frees his subjects here from the shackles of identity and interiority. This liberation from the sexual "soul" is a key feature of both Foucault's and Guibert's understandings of friendship. Both prefer to explore the surface pleasures of the flesh over the internal workings of desire.¹⁰ As we shall see, for Foucault this move is politically strategic: to put faith in the "sexuality" of the *scientia sexualis* is to remain forever entangled in a discursive game that has been rigged from the outset. Such trust in the liberatory powers of sexuality, in Foucault's estimation, represses actual practices of freedom.¹¹ His, then, is a friendship not determined or limited by King Sexuality; no longer the fulcrum around which interpersonal relations are defined, sexuality loses its constituting force. The implementation of this insight alone, I argue throughout, might go some way in enriching the relational mosaic and, consequently, toward the fabrication of genuine alternatives to the administered life.¹² With this in mind, we can safely say that the "truth" of Guibert's sensual subjects in "*Lami*" does not lie in some interior sexual essence. Indeed, the traditionally impassable barrier between friend and lover seems to collapse—the potentially sexual act of touching does not establish divisive relational parameters or determine for good these men's identities. The terms of this relationship remain open: An impersonal intimacy holds them in suspension between desire and restraint, between proximity and distance. Although one is, or both are, "the friend," this designation now connotes a protean malleability,

even a becoming-exogenous. Such boundlessness encourages an active practice of friendship: It requires attention and care, a mutual trust, and, bizarre as it sounds, betrayals.

Comprehending the latter, quite unusual feature of friendship as shared estrangement requires a brief detour through some biographical details of Guibert and Foucault's lived relationship. Ralph Sarkonak, Guibert's principal biographer, describes their rapport as follows:

the mutual attraction that these two men felt for each other's company, conversations at once casual and serious, narcissistic betrayals, and the telling of secrets typical of the life of gay bars, as well as the braiding together of life's daily rituals—including illness and death—with the outrageous *jouissances* of sex and the creative act. It is the truth of a friendship of two kindred spirits, each caught up in his own original manner in a web of words, yet still full of admiration for his friend's unique literary form of praxis. (185)

Emphasizing the friendship's intellectual, conversational, catty, and creative aspects, Sarkonak's rendering reads almost like an "out" gay update of the cryptically queer bond between another pair of famous French intellectuals, Montaigne and la Boétie.¹³ With the exception of the "narcissistic betrayals," a behavior not typically sought after in a potential friend, their rapport comes across as quite traditional: supportive, inspirational, perhaps a bit competitive, but rounded out with a mutual admiration for each others' work. So, whence come the betrayals? Sarkonak is referring here to two publications in which Guibert disclosed private aspects of Foucault's life: The first, *To the Friend*, in which Guibert transforms Foucault into the fictional character, Muzil, and supposedly "tells all" about Foucault's struggle with AIDS—a matter Foucault did not discuss in public; and the second, a short story, "A Man's Secrets," written the day after Foucault's funeral, in which Guibert relays three of Foucault's childhood memories that apparently had a significant effect on the philosopher's development. Such revelations scandalized the French literary world, which consequently accused Guibert of exploiting Foucault's legacy for personal gain. Guibert, who called his treason an "amorous crime," countered his critics by claiming "complete authority" in breaching confidentiality because, as persons with AIDS, he and Foucault were united by a "common thanatological destiny,"¹⁴ and that "it wasn't so much my friend's last agony I was describing as it was my own" (*To the Friend* 91–92). Although these betrayals have been variously interpreted as vengeful acts of a jilted lover, "narcissistic," as above, and opportunistic,¹⁵

all of which may certainly apply, it seems to me that they also foreground the importance of betrayal to the mutual theory of friendship articulated and practiced by these men. A third instance of betrayal, not mentioned by Sarkonak or others, compounds the treachery as it concerns Guibert betraying Foucault betraying Guibert. In a quite personal letter sent to Guibert in 1983, Foucault more or less informs his friend that he is an afterthought, an aside, in the philosopher's daily life (Betrayal One). Designating this letter a "gift" and a "true text," Guibert publishes the potentially embarrassing epistle in *L'Autre Journal* in 1985 (Betrayal Two).¹⁶ Foucault's deceit comes after a lush poetic description of his morning ritual spying on a man across the alley from his apartment. The last line of the letter reads: "This morning the [man's] window is closed; instead I am writing to you."¹⁷ Until this final phrase, Guibert remains unaddressed and unacknowledged. If the window across the way had been open, he is told, the anonymous beauty would have occupied his friend's morning. Voyeuristic pleasure, in essence, takes precedence over friendship. At once intimate in its candid rendering of possibly unsavory behavior and cold in its lack of personal sentiment, this letter, the point of departure for Chapter 1, not only gives a sense of their unusual rapport but also demands that we take seriously betrayal as crucial to their friendship praxis. More interesting than mere narcissism (or, if it is narcissism, it is one so unbounded it cannot distinguish self from friend), betrayal if nothing else works to prevent a dialectical fusion: As an anti-intersubjective practice, it refuses to assimilate self to other, other to self; by cutting a transverse line through the friend–enemy opposition, it complicates binary logic and provokes a productive tension between friends. In short, betrayal demands a rethinking of the traditional ethical terms of friendship.

Chapter 1, then, begins with a close reading of Foucault's letter in order to highlight five features of his theory of friendship: anti-confessional discourse; parrhesia; ascetics; impersonality; and estrangement. Reading the letter in relation to *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, one of Foucault's last seminars at the *Collège de France*, as well as other late works, especially interviews and invited lectures, gives context to its themes and foregrounds their sexual-political stakes. Because friendship has been so idealized in the Western philosophical canon—forming the bedrock of Aristotle's *polis*, surpassing romantic love for Montaigne—it is no surprise that gays and lesbians have likewise valorized it as a respite from social ostracism as well as an alternative to compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity. If one's very being and its attendant relations are deemed inferior if not pathological, why not align that self and its community with a superior relational form?¹⁸ Foucault's concept of friendship, however, is anything but utopian: Betrayal, distance, brutal

honesty, indeed, an impersonal intimacy founded in estrangement are its makings. This is, to be blunt, the shit of friendship. When the most troubling aspects of relationships become the very foundation of a friendship, however, new subjective, communal, and political forms can be imagined.

In the interview, "Friendship as a Way of Life," Foucault designates friendship the becoming of queer relationality: "the development towards which the problem of homosexuality tends is the one of friendship" (*Essential, VI: Ethics* 136). Chapter 2, then, seeks to analyze this "problem" and its "development," which requires, as Foucault insinuates, the construction of a new ethics. Revisiting the encounter between Foucault and Guibert, I mine Foucault's late work and Guibert's *To the Friend* to articulate an ethics of discomfort that gives direction to friendship as a *mode de vie*. The community of friends in Guibert's novel, for example, is founded on an acceptance of finitude; it emphasizes that which cannot be shared and intensifies alienation between friends. At the same time, these friendships encourage the mutual cultivation of an immanent impersonal self, calling into question traditional, dialectical conceptions of subjectivity, community, and belonging. The ethics of discomfort guiding these friends opens onto communal forms that cannot be contained by sadistic social hierarchies of identitarian difference.

Returning to the cover for a moment, an ethics of discomfort can likewise be glimpsed in "*L'ami*." As we have seen, Guibert's friends inhabit the gray area in a black-and-white world, wandering the zone between anyone-whomever/someone-in-particular, intimacy/distance, and yearning/restraint. With an understanding of betrayal as integral to Guibertian-Foucaultian friendship, the anonymity of the photo's subjects now becomes even more significant. Namelessness and facelessness—that is, identityless-ness—provide a blank slate for the invention of new subjective forms. Raymond Bellour focuses on this aspect of Foucault and Guibert's rapport in the following passage:

It was not just homosexuality that brought them together. They shared a profound, indomitable understanding, an understanding that one supposes was at the root of the mutual fascination inherent in their friendship, and the understanding was, specifically, of fiction, of the invention of the self as a fiction, with all the risks that that entails in life as well as in writing and philosophy. ("H.G./E" 78)

Betrayals are one such risk in the formation of new personas and fictive selves. Guibert's disclosure of Foucault's secrets works toward the creation

of a different Foucault, and hence the friend breathes again in a new form. This itself is part of the ethics of discomfort: The friend's role is actively to enhance the other's potential, to push the friend to become-other. Betrayal is one practice through which this occurs; it instigates an ethical relation that cares little for historically determined identity. In fact, it seems that Foucault and Guibert treated each other's public personas as characters to be written, molded, and manipulated, regardless of consequence to self or other. Furthermore, considering Guibert made a career of blurring lines between fact and fiction in his novels, his treachery is both a literary allusion and a literary creation. Jean Genet, the great theorist of betrayal, the master of friendly enmity, the saintly despiser of homosexual identity, is the key literary referent here, and he too comes to life again through Guibert's actions.¹⁹ Guibert-Genet creates Foucault-Muzil and the ethical imperative to annihilate identity, to transform the self and the friend, is fulfilled. The practice of betrayal, then, is an experiment in an antirelational ethics that points toward a politics beyond identity.²⁰

Moreover, secrets are, of course, meant to be shared: As Guibert writes in *The Fantom Image*: "Secrets must necessarily circulate."²¹ What gives a secret its power is its potential to expose; without this, it is nothing. Because, according to Foucault, sexuality in modernity has been discursively constructed as *the* secret, as that which reveals the self, undercutting the secret's power becomes a strategy for operating beyond the constricting limits of biopolitical rationality. The friend-enemy dichotomy, which holds considerable sway in the philosophical canon from Aristotle through Carl Schmitt, is shattered when the betrayal of secrets is part and parcel of friendship. In this sense, the true friend—the friend who will push one beyond historically determined identity, the friend who will help another think and relate differently—is the betrayer. Guibert hints at this insight in the following passage from "A Man's Secrets": "These secrets [Foucault's secrets] would have vanished with Atlantis—so patiently, so sumptuously sculpted only to be destroyed in an instant by a thunderbolt—had an avowal of friendship not also suggested a vague and uncertain hope of passing them on" (67). This hope, "vague and uncertain," for betrayal, what Emily Apter calls an "avowed disavowal" (85), gives lie to the title of the story: A secret told with the expectation that all will, and perhaps should, be revealed is not a secret at all.²² Or, if it is still a secret, it can only be an *open* secret—that discursive formation bedeviling homosexuality since its invention.²³ Here, then, is the rub: toying with betrayals, self-exposures, and open secrets, Foucault and Guibert in their friendship praxis undermine not only the logic of the closet and the in/out mentality of gay liberation, but also the very idea of sexuality itself.

In Chapter 3 I explore the ontological foundations of Foucaultian friendship so as to argue that the friend only emerges once the sexological category of homosexual is overcome. Just as Monique Wittig obliterates the always-already patriarchal category “woman” in order to create her “lesbian,” Foucault too uses a Nietzschean conception of radical negation to create an autonomous friend. This chapter completes my sketch of the philosophical context for Foucault’s friendship model. A careful look at his late writings on power, biopower, and resistance, as well as an assessment of Foucault’s relationship to Hegelian dialectics, offer a glimpse of friendship’s potential political forms. I assert moreover that in his exploration of friendship Foucault solidifies his status as a philosopher of immanence. His antidialectical turn, coincident with, if not a consequence of, his studies in ontology and friendship in Antiquity, demands that his theories of power, subjectivity, and sexuality be re-evaluated. Only with the recent publication of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* can we adequately assess how a Foucaultian immanentist ontology bears not only on his theories of friendship and sexuality but also on Foucaultian political strategy itself. For this reason I revisit two Foucault-inspired thinkers who energized queer theory in the 1990s, namely Judith Butler and David Halperin, to reassess their interpretation of Foucaultian subjectivity and resistance. Using these thinkers’ work both as a building block and a point of contrast, I contend that Foucault’s final turn away from Hegelian conceptions of being engenders new conceptions of community and politics that hold the capacity to revitalize queer studies.

One such important insight from Foucault’s late work concerns the delinking of sexuality and truth in friendship (as witnessed in the betrayals, the open secrets, and mutual invention of fictitious selves) and the consequent relinking of self-knowledge and self-transformation. Foucault designates this process, surprisingly, a spiritual practice. Indeed, it is startling to find in Foucault’s *Hermeneutics* an insistence on the necessity of spirituality for both the care of the self and for progressive political action. He argues that the separation of spirituality from philosophy represents not only the historical point of rupture between ancient and modern Western thought but also the great schism in the genealogy of subjectivity and truth. He hesitantly designates the “Cartesian moment” as the instant at which erudition subsumes praxis, whence access to truth requires merely self-knowledge, not self-transformation. A subject always already capable of truth irrespective of way of life, then, is Descartes’ Platonic legacy. Such an insight raises some important questions: Is truth by self-knowledge alone perhaps the navel-gazing ruse that has brought us the deployment of sexuality, identity politics, even biopower *tout court*? Is Foucault’s late turn toward the care of the self an attempt

to reopen a space for a thoroughly *materialist* spirituality in philosophical thought?²⁴ One thing is clear from *Hermeneutics*: For Foucault, what we lost in the divorce of philosophy and spirituality is tantamount to the foreclosure of subjective and relational becomings. However irrecoverable spirituality in its ancient forms might be, philosophy today is worthless if not undertaken as a quest to reunite knowledge with practice, thought with ways of life. Philosophy today must effect the transition from *stultitia* to *sapientia*, or it is nothing.

“We are in this condition of *stultitia*,” Foucault writes, “when we have not yet taken care of ourselves” (*Hermeneutics* 131). In Stoic thought, the *stultus* (literally “the fool”) is restless, flighty, distracted—too affected by external representations and internal turbulence to will freely, too dispersed in the world to be concerned with the then imperative project of self-care. The *stultus* has no authentic relationship with himself and thus requires the help of a philosopher to reach a state of *sapientia*. The *sapiens*, by contrast, displays self-control and self-mastery and is capable of taking pleasure in himself because he has worked hard to will freely. He has harmonized thought and behavior and in the process has become the true subject of his actions. The role of the guide in self-transformation is more than the simple imparting of theoretical knowledge and practical know-how: He must speak frankly concerning the *stultus*’s bad choices and harmful habits and take an active, daily, therapeutic role in correcting them. Although the concrete form of the philosopher-guide shifts in Antiquity (from the Epicurean and Pythagorean schools to Marcus Aurelius’s private counselors), one characteristic remains more or less constant through the first and second centuries: The philosopher-guide must be a friend.²⁵

Although Hellenistic and Roman models for friendship are instructive and enticing, their masculinist, racist, and classist dimensions have no place in a contemporary context—we definitely cannot go home again. All the same, the Ancient precept of the care of the self, filtered through Foucault’s exegeses, is this project’s guiding force. His late work offers a powerful model for reimagining male friendship in particular. By jettisoning sexuality as the truth-telling fulcrum distinguishing friend from lover, it explodes the coercive and impoverishing codes of homosocial male bonding so crucial to patriarchal social hierarchies. In the spirit of Lillian Faderman’s *Surpassing the Love of Men*, Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” and Monique Wittig’s *The Straight Mind*, my project molds Foucault’s concept of friendship into one that simultaneously reinvests it as a political relation, confounding gender and sexual categorization and giving lie to the very concept of sexuality as we know it. The primary subcategories through which we understand

sexuality—principally homo- and heterosexuality—have provided an all too efficient framework for classifying and evaluating human affection. The modern byproduct of our centuries-old investment in sexuality as a window into human personality, behavior, psychology, and identity becomes an oppressive command to locate, express, and speak of our sexual desires while paradoxically policing their every permutation. As Foucault repeatedly points out, the sexological invention of an essential, bifurcated sexuality not only impoverishes our relational world but also, and more insidiously, provides a useful tool for the social management of individuals—heterosexuals and homosexuals alike—in the maintenance of patriarchal, heteronormative power structures.

For Foucault, the friend as we know it—from the Western literary canon, from the reified representations offered by the culture industry—can no longer be trusted. In order for friendship to be viable, meaningful, again, it must metamorphose into something altogether different. AIDS ushers in this metamorphosis with poignant urgency. For the communities hit hardest by AIDS in the early days of the crisis, finitude—that most singular and most common fact of existence—becomes ubiquitous and unavoidable. For Foucault's queer audience, friendship as a way of life mutates into friendship as a way of death. The impersonal intimacy glimpsed in Foucault and Guibert's friendship foregrounds an acceptance of finitude that emerges so strikingly in AIDS friendships. Indeed, Guibert's forceful hand gesture in "*Lami*" can be read as a futile attempt to bridge the infinite distance, the estrangement, between friends. And yet, when a nontranscendent estrangement in the form of finitude becomes the bedrock of friendship, a respect for the absolute alterity and singularity of the self and other is encouraged. A relation founded on a finitude so radically unsharable can be the cornerstone of a community that coheres not in identity but in a more radical being-in-common. In the gaping crevasse between friends, a politics of shared estrangement lies in wait. Therefore, I analyze in the latter half of the book the politics of friendship at the heart of organizations such as the AIDS Buddy system and ACT UP. Such groups transform friendships of shared estrangement into a mode of biopolitical resistance that breaches boundaries of gender, race, class, and generation and that encourages radically democratic forms of citizenship and civic participation. Indeed, the politicization of friendship as shared estrangement in AIDS caregiving and activism offers a powerful model for biopolitical formations unwedded to the dialectic of identity and difference—precisely the model needed to combat the social management of life in the age of Empire.

After developing the ontological and ethical implications of Foucault's spare but suggestive writings on friendship in Chapters 1 to 3, then, I set

out in Chapter 4 to assess the political salience of this friendship model in light of recent developments in the political economy. Broadly, Chapters 4, 5, and the epilogue aim to return biopolitics to its “home” in sexuality studies, to bring queer theory up to speed with biopolitical debates, and to articulate a concept of shared estrangement as biopolitical strategy. Although Foucault underscores the decisive role sexuality plays in the development of biopower, recent elaborations of the concept, especially in contemporary Marxist and neo-Heideggerian critiques of globalization and sovereign power, de-emphasize, if not ignore, the importance of sexuality for biopolitical regimes. Specifically, whereas Foucault designates sexuality as biopower’s central *dispositif*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in the *Empire* trilogy that sexuality in the post-Fordist era is no longer the privileged site of biopolitical control. When human affect, language, and cooperation are subsumed into the productive processes of capital, they argue, the very thoughts, gestures, and expressions of the social body become capital’s principal commodity. Although I take seriously Hardt and Negri’s analysis of biopower’s enmeshment with labor and capital, I question their failure to define a specific concept of sexuality in the biopolitical context. When AIDS, a subject that receives no serious discussion in Hardt and Negri’s work, is understood as a primary locus of biopolitical struggle, sexuality simply cannot be ignored or folded into a generalized concept of *bios*. So overdetermined by the category of sexuality, so enmeshed in the struggle over life administration, AIDS must be at the forefront of any and all analyses of global biopolitics. I thus focus on AIDS service organizations and activist movements that work to delink sexuality from truth by transforming a concept of friendship as shared estrangement into biopolitical resistance.

Friendship, as I understand it and as I argue throughout, bespeaks the anarchical contingency of all relationality. In its very nature it is *anti*-institutional, indeed it cannot congeal into an epistemological object known as “society.” It is excessive of self-identity, and hence contrary to Aristotle’s claim, structurally incapable of grounding social forms. I find it nonetheless necessary to run the risk of seeking out communal and political forms that approximate friendship: ones that acknowledge the impossibility of the social as such, ones that embrace the contradiction of relating at the point of unrelatability. It is only in such forms that we might think and live beyond the inherently inequitable hierarchies of identitarian difference. In Chapter 5, then, I locate in the work of David Wojnarowicz a concept—what he calls “sense”—that reveals the political potential of an ethics of antirelationality. His memoirs, written from the frontlines of the AIDS activist battlefield in the 1980s and 1990s, are instructive here in that they remind us of our continued failure to

understand HIV as distinct from sexual identity and of our incapacity to disentangle sexuality from subjective truth. Consonant with Foucault's insight that the discursive link between sexual desire and self-truth is a formidable tool of control, Wojnarowicz's "sense" ruptures this link by deterritorializing sexual affect and putting it to work in a politics of shared estrangement. The "sense" he gleans from his various sexual escapades involves a breakdown of intersubjectivity, a delinking of sexual desire and truth, and an understanding of death's immanence to life. In the recognition of the "common thanatological destiny" he shares with a multitude of AIDS casualties, in acknowledging the nonidentical sameness of the other, Wojnarowicz transforms his alienated, nihilistic rage into collective resistance. Aiding in my articulation of Wojnarowicz's political vision are the various thinkers comprising "the antisocial turn" in queer studies. Coined by Judith Halberstam, this term refers to the work of Leo Bersani, Heather Love, Tim Dean, Lee Edelman, William Haver, and others, which resists the increasing hetero- and homonormativity of queer culture.²⁶ Anti-assimilationist to the core, these projects embrace the abject social position homosexuality historically has been obliged to occupy and explore the political potential, if any, of negativity, hopelessness, and antirelativity. Although Foucault's concept of friendship as shared estrangement certainly falls under the "antisocial" rubric, I find its approximation in the AIDS Buddy network and ACT UP a hope of sorts for mapping sites of resistance to biopolitical administration in the present. My project seeks to theorize and reclaim this politics of friendship for queer activism today.

The recent legalization of gay marriage in Canada, Spain, and an increasing number of U.S. states reveals the effectiveness of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) identity politics for institutional legitimacy. Although such victories are hard won and worthy of celebration, the legalization of gay marriage should not, contrary to conservative critic Andrew Sullivan's insistence, put an end to queer politics.²⁷ I assert, with Foucault, that the progress made by reproducing the marriage bond is slight. A radical queer politics would fight *against* the institutional impoverishment of the social fabric, and *for* the creation of unconventional forms of union and community. Friendship, as a formless relation without telos, provides a counterpoint to a GLBT political agenda seeking social legitimacy in the right to marry. Friendship is an immanent alternative to an institutionalized—hence concretized, deadened—form of union. Whereas marriage enacts the privatization of relational pleasures and practices, friendship remains properly communal, in common. Leela Gandhi teases out this aspect of friendship in her important work, *Affective Communities*. Friendship for her is "the most comprehensive philosophical signifier

for all those invisible, affective gestures that refuse alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging.”²⁸ Gandhi’s understanding of friendship’s inherent homelessness, its uncanniness, mirrors my earlier articulation of the emergence of the concept of friendship as shared estrangement. This concept is the property of neither Foucault nor Guibert nor myself; the idea and the relation are generated in common and regenerate the common. The friend is neither possessive nor possessed, neither owner nor owned. If, for Foucault, the becoming of homosexuality is friendship, it is because friendship is always a becoming; if homosexuality is a “problem,” it is precisely because it arrests the becoming of being-in-common. The friend is the fleeting placeholder of an asubjective affectivity moving through ontologically variegated singularities; it is the figure that intuits and enacts the common, that which seethes beneath and is excessive of relations and communities founded on identitarian difference. Indeed, coming back to the cover photograph, perhaps what Guibert best captures in “*Lami*” is not only the space of the in-between, but also a zone of unbelonging, a property of the property-less. It is no small feat to traverse such terrain, adrift in the great wide open, ceaselessly threatened and delegitimated by landed, private interests. It is the goal of the coming pages, however, to discover where such wandering might lead us.