‘Dominoes’

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This work has not yet been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date:

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Abstract:

The main component of this dissertation is a creative project and screenplay for a full feature film called 'Dominoes'. It follows the story of an unnamed teacher (referred to in the screenplay only as V) from one of Cape Town's lower income neighborhoods, who, when faced by the gradual and then sudden brutalizing effects of crime on his community and on him personally, becomes a vigilante.

He haphazardly targets his local crime hierarchy, confronting them with the same destructive violence that they terrorize the community with. As things escalate, his friend, a local policeman, as well as one of his students, are drawn into the battle and become entangled in the carnage, thereby altering the course of the vigilante's crusade as he has to juggle friendship, loyalty and duty while navigating this new and dangerous terrain.

Additionally I include a research paper: 'The Fine Line between Vigilance and Anarchy – Unravelling the Paradox of Vigilantism'. This paper broadly outlines the phenomena of vigilantism, drawing on research from experts as well as examples from real life. It delves into the vigilante character as both a factual fragment of human society, as well as a fictional manifestation of human frustration.

I propose to draw comparisons between the concept of vigilantism and the idealogy of anarchism, shedding light on the the fine line that exists between them, and attempting to show that through their motives and outlook on the world, the vigilante and the anarchist are, in fact, brothers in arms.

The Fine Line between Vigilance and Anarchy

Unravelling the Paradox of Vigilantism

In a country constantly reminded of the violent criminal element which stalks its streets, the vigilante should perhaps never be far from the South African collective conscious. Though the causes of the violence which so dramatically pervades South Africa are undoubtedly myriad, gross social inequality, an overburdened criminal justice system, overflowing prisons and a government increasingly divided in its allegiances and corrupt in its activities does little to alleviate the crises. In a country with a political history that sustained violence as a legitimate form of government protest for decades under apartheid, there is a tendency in the South African public to turn to violence as a solution for various social ills. Vigilantism is by no means unique to South African society, but here, perhaps more than elsewhere, the citizenry may experience the need to act out against the perceived threats within its specific communities. With the South African Police Service (SAPS) acknowledging 15940 reported cases of murder for the period of April 2010 to March 2011, not even mentioning other violent crimes, the incentive for vigilante action is quite strong (Crime Research and Statistics – SAPS). The inadequacies of government and the civil service are the catalysts for vigilante action, as these actions only arise when the state, for whatever reason, fails in the sovereign duties bestowed upon it by the democratic process. When situations which are perceived as a threat to the safety and security of the public remain unaddressed by the organs of state, vigilantes may act out against those presumed to be the transgressors. Thus the vigilante is born, one of the great paradoxical figures of life and fiction, who breaks the laws of the state to ensure the safekeeping of society from lawbreakers.

Organisations with vigilante agendas, the most recognisable in a Western Cape context arguably being People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad), have frequently participated in extra-legal activities to combat the criminal element in society,[1] but these organisations have a troubled past and have often come into direct conflict with the legal system which they profess to bolster. As Bill Dixon and Lisa-Marie Johns explains in their article on Pagad

[1] In Pagad's case in the Cape Flats, where the organization is situated.

and vigilantism:[2] "The state's view of Pagad has changed dramatically over the last four years. From a popular anti-crime movement it has become first a violent, and therefore illegitimate, vigilante organisation and then, since 1998,[3] an urban terror group threatening not only the state's monopoly on the use of coercive force but the very foundations of constitutional democracy" (n.p.).[4] Though vigilantes and vigilante organisations may set out to combat those who engage in criminal activities which threaten the safety of the community, this conduct can be morally complex and ideologically flawed. Not only are the laws of the state being violated, but the entire legal process is being circumvented, which could potentially, and has historically, lead to gross violations of the rights of citizens. Of course, the counterargument entails that those who violate the rights of those around them in a violent and criminal manner cannot expect their own rights to be respected. The matter remains contentious and the paradoxical state of the vigilante, whether individual or organised, entails that at any point the balance can be tipped so that the vigilante becomes what it set out to fight. Subsequently it is a precarious title to hold, just as it is a difficult one to describe.

It thus becomes clear that the vigilante as societal agent or fictional character is often misunderstood or misrepresented exactly because of his paradoxical nature.[5] As Les Johnston points out, media coverage of vigilantism "invariable adopt[s] a sensationalist style of analysis, using the term without sufficient clarity or rigour" (221). In fiction too this is often the case, and the vigilante is often portrayed as the last and lonely bastion of justice and righteousness in a world of corruption. One need only think of recent films like *Man on Fire*,[6] *The Brave One*,[7] *Death Sentence*[8] or the massively popular *Batman* films[9] by Christopher Nolan

[2] Gangs, Pagad and the State: Vigilantism and Revenge Violence in the Western Cape, 2001.
[3] In 1998 Pagad was linked in some way to "the assassination of more than a dozen leading gangsters" as well as "a wave of bombings that has hit the Western Cape" (Dixon and Johns, n.p.). The extent of Pagad's involvement remains uncertain.
[4] Anarchist texts have been circulating in various forms throughout the years, and with a typical disdain for intellectual property rights, are now freely available in pdf format on the world wide web, thus the lack of proper pagination.
[5] I use the masculine pronoun throughout to avoid confusion when I refer to the male protagonist of the screenplay "Dominoes" who also comes under discussion.
[6] 2004. Directed by Tony Scott.
[7] 2007. Directed by Neil Jordan.
[8] 2007. Directed by James Wan.
[9] *Batman Begins* 2005, *The Dark Knight* 2008, *The Dark Knight Rises* 2012 (forthcoming). Admittedly, in the *Dark Knight* Nolan does engage with the problematics of vigilantism quite significantly.

to understand how the vigilante is treated onscreen. Using force, often excessive and graphically depicted, the vigilante single-handedly overcomes the violent criminals that have either wronged them personally or threaten the security of society. Thus romanticised, the character of the vigilante often oversimplifies the moral dilemmas created by such actions, and disregards the complex nature of the true vigilante. Simply put then, the paradoxical nature of vigilantism has not been fully understood, or at the very least has been misrepresented by the media, both factual and fictional.

In light of this problem, this research paper will attempt to identify a new way of understanding the vigilante and vigilantism. My argument relies on two theoretical footholds, the one being vigilantism, the other being anarchy. By drawing on theories aimed at real world vigilantism, and combining it with the philosophy of anarchy as set out by several prominent anarchists, I propose to draw a strong correlation between the vigilante and the philosophy of anarchy. My argument will contend that the former is in several significant ways the agent of the latter. In the actions of the vigilante I find the mandate which is advanced by the advocates of anarchy, and argue that vigilantism is essentially a fundamental, if rudimentary, form of anarchy at work in contemporary society.

My argument will set out by drawing on Les Johnston's seminal work, *What is vigilantism?* (1996), to identify the defining features of vigilantism as a starting point for the comparison. To give practical application to Johnston's theories I rely on the screenplay "Dominoes", which I submit along with this paper as part of this MA project. This allows me on the one hand to cement the vigilante in practical terms, while also explaining the planning which went into the characterisation and plotting of the screenplay. Further I utilise the work of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first person to ever identify himself as an anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin, one of the foremost theorists on anarchism, Pyotr Kropotkin, a prominent Russian anarchist at the dawn of the 20th century, and Colin Ward, one of the leading anarchist thinkers of the past century, to understand this concept and to cement the correlations I wish to draw. Finally I include a look at several recent global occurrences which bolster the argument I make for an entwined notion of "anarcho-vigilantism", through which it becomes clear that these notions are indeed closely linked and that vigilantism can be more fully understood in an anarchistic context.

Of initial importance is then to identify what exactly is meant by the term "vigilante", as many theorists have lamented the unspecific use of this term. As Johnston explains, "vigilantism is rather more difficult to conceptualize than one might first imagine" (221), which has led to a "wide range of apparently heterogeneous behaviours" problematically treated as vigilante action (222). Johnston then wishes to address this issue and his article proceeds to identify the six fundamental aspects which need to be present for an act to be considered as an instance of vigilantism, or an agent to be considered a vigilante. Though I do not wish to duplicate his work here, it is necessary to give an overview of these attributes to understand what is to be understood under the term.[10] In the article Johnston references several diverse and recent instances of vigilante action, or action which has been treated as such, to explain the distinctions he draws. This is helpful in that he constructs clear differentiations between vigilantism, revenge activities, politically driven vendettas or actions which may superficially appear vigilantist, but which are, according to his clear argumentation, not. Instead of following suite, I will clarify these distinctions by pointing to the elements of characterisation which went into the construction of the protagonist of my accompanying screenplay. This is not meant as self-glorification or an analysis of my own work, but rather allows me to illustrate how Johnston's work has been informative in creating a vigilante who actually fits the bill.

The first aspect Johnston then identifies is that a certain amount of planning and organisation needs to be undertaken by the agent of vigilantism. To rule out acts of "spontaneous self defence" he argues that the vigilante "must engage in some form of preparatory activity – such as the surveillance of an intended victim or the observation of a particular location" (Johnston 222). Johnston does maintain, however, that this need not be extensive, and rather qualifies this requirement by stating that "*minimal* planning" is sufficient for an act to be considered vigilant in nature (222). The upshot of this is that at least on some basic level the agent of such an action must make the conscious decision to proceed in the extra-legal persecution of perceived wrongdoers. Whether cognisant of the illegal implications of such actions or not, the vigilante must pursue these activities in such a

[10] I direct readers to Johnston's article for the details I omit here.

manner that it transcends self-defence against an imminent threat, and rather becomes an active undertaking. The vigilante acts rather than reacts.

The protagonist in Dominoes (his name will be discussed below) fulfils this element in differing degrees. Though he vocalises his discontent with the criminality he sees in the community around him from early in the narrative, his first act is not well thought through. Throughout several initial scenes he jogs past the house where he knows several criminals, suspected to be violent drug dealers, have set up shop. Their proximity to his house leaves him uneasy, as he already finds himself in a crime-ridden city, in a crime-ridden country. After several brushes with violence and criminal actions, culminating in the murder of his close friend and neighbour, Dave, his response to the criminality around him changes. One night, instead of disregarding or fearing the sounds and sirens of illegal activities around him, he heads towards it, with a makeshift weapon at hand. Though he is in no immediate danger of becoming a victim, he chooses to become the aggressor. After his first foray into slapdash vigilantism, he subsequently goes about it in a more systematic and planned manner, as when he acquires the help of Thomas and four other day labourers in a night attack on the drug dealer's base of operations.

Next Johnston stipulates that a vigilante must be a "private [agent]" (224), and explicitly excludes state officials and those employed in the private security sector. Thus police officers, even when off-duty, cannot be engaged in vigilante action, since, Johnston argues, even when off-duty "they continue to enjoy full police powers" (224). Similarly, private security guards, even when engaged in conduct which would otherwise be considered vigilantist, cannot be regarded as vigilantes due to the fact that they form part of larger "legally constituted commercial bodies" (Johnston 226). The fact that they are engaged in a commercial venture, one regulated by contractual and legal stipulations, entails that they fall outside the auspices of vigilantism. The significance of this is that a vigilante must be engaged in a "private *voluntary* activity" (Ibid), and as such the conduct in question must be carried out on a non-contractual basis, without the authority of any institution with the capacity to grant such authority.

In "Dominoes" I engaged with this requirement in several ways. Of initial note is the decision to leave the protagonist nameless, and though he is referred to as "V" throughout the screenplay, he is never narratively named.[11] This is admittedly not a novel way to denote the everyman aspect of the character, which is why he was also written to be racially and culturally heterogeneous. In conversations V freely switches language between Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, leaving him with an amalgamated dialogue and unspecific racial or cultural designation. This leaves the character open for interpretation and he can be cast almost irrespective of racial or cultural considerations, with little or no changes to the screenplay. Further the character was written as a teacher at a local primary school, a line of work which is far removed from the ranks of private security or government law enforcement. All these aspects together ensure that he is clearly a private agent under no obligation to act as he does, an average citizen driven to extraordinary activities.

Johnston third aspect, which states that vigilantism requires "autonomous citizenship", ties in closely with the second requirement (Ibid). Autonomy entails that a vigilante must act "without the state's authority or support" (Ibid). Not only must the vigilante be engaged in private voluntary activities, but these activities must be based on independent impetus, without state sanction, without institutional backing, without legal grounds. Vigilantism is only considered as such in the absence of institutionalised mandates, even should the activities in question receive widespread populist approval. Johnston explains that vigilantism can be identified as a "popular movement of citizens engaged in self-protection", but popular support does not translate into official and legal sanctioning (226). The emphasis is that self-protection is left, for better or worse, in the hands of the citizenry, and that autonomous agents embark on activities which are not legally enshrined or protected.

This aspect should be clear from the fact that V is a teacher, and is subsequently in no position to claim that the vigilantist activities in which he engages have any legal or state sanction. Through several conversations and confrontations with his friend Calvin, a police officer, there is little doubt in the V's mind that he is engaging in unlawful, even criminal

[11] Since no character in "Dominoes" ever mentions the vigilante protagonist by name, I decided, as a personal tribute to the masked crusader from the film "V for Vendetta", to call him V, if only in the screenplay. I will continue to use this moniker here as it will avoid confusion and clarify my argument.

activities. His actions as a vigilante are based on a personal compulsion, bereft of any authority, yet through several conversations with co-workers and friends, it becomes clear that he is not unique in his compulsion. The widespread predominance of criminality in their community is something that all the characters grapple with at some point, making V's cause a popular one, yet no less unlawful for it. It is important to note that the character Calvin who ultimately aids V in his actions, cannot, according to Johnston, be considered a vigilante. Even when Calvin oversteps the restrictions of procedure and the due course of the legal system, he continues to be a state supported officer of the law. On the one hand, this acts as deterrent to Calvin who realises the legal repercussions of their activities, while on the other it does serve as protection for him, if not for V. Calvin can still rely on his authority as a police officer to defend, perhaps not entirely truthfully, his involvement in acts which would otherwise be illegal.

Perhaps the most popular aspect attributed to vigilantism is what Johnston identifies as the "use or threatened use of force" (Ibid). He discusses several real-world examples of vigilante action and reaches the conclusion that violence is indeed a central requirement to the nature of vigilantism. However, he argues that violence need not necessarily be manifested, that the threat of force against perceived transgressors "is sufficient to designate an action vigilantist when other necessary conditions are satisfied" (Johnston 227). Thus the mere threat of violence against any alleged wrongdoers, without the situation ever requiring the actual use of force, should be considered as a vigilantist activity. This requirement is perhaps one of the most commonly held aspects of vigilantism, and has been instrumental in the construction of the vigilante throughout media. Any number of films rely heavily on this notion of violent justice for characterisation of the vigilante; the protagonist driven to aggression, the regular threats of physical violence against those who are in the wrong, which frequently escalate into spectacular and explosive scenarios which leaves many battered, bruised or dead.

There is little reason to expand on this element of the screenplay, as it is relatively self-evident that V alternates the threat of force with several instances of actual violence. V is the aggressor throughout; having provoked the criminals though they had had no knowledge of his existence before his series of attacks on them. But though V is the one to engage in a pre-emptive strike, the violence is not entirely morally condemnable, seeing as the victims of his

attacks are themselves violent criminals. It becomes a "live-and-die-by-the-sword" situation, in which those who are regularly involved in violent criminal activities find themselves on the receiving end of violent and also criminal activities.

The fifth distinction that Johnston draws is that vigilantism occurs as a reaction to crime and social deviance. Of these the most commonly understood is the former, the vigilante who opposes the criminal elements and (ironically) fights violently to re-establish the peace and security of the society threatened by that criminality. Social deviance, however, entails a broader, subjective spectrum of activity which is considered by the particular society to be deviant, even though it may not necessarily be illegal. Johnston thus "draw[s] a distinction between two modes of vigilantism: one having a focus on 'crime control', the other being concerned with 'social control' or, more specifically, with the 'maintenance of communal, ethnic or sectarian order and values'" (228). To limit the scope of this requirement, as social control can be interpreted too broadly to be useful, Johnston maintains that "[v]igilantism arises when some established order is perceived to be under threat from transgression (or potential transgression) of institutionalized norms" (229). Vigilantism is a normative activity, one which depends on the norms and values of the particular community for it to have any context, without which the distinction between vigilante and criminal can easily dissipate.[12] What is interesting here is that we see the vigilante inversely defined, he is considered as such by identifying what exactly bears the brunt of his forceful actions. Not only is this a strong case of Othering at work, where the character of the vigilante becomes more clearly defined by investigating that which he opposes, but it also becomes clear why the vigilante often has popular support from its community, or receives the sympathy of the viewers. As a character who forcefully counterworks criminals or those perceived by a particular social group to be deviant, the vigilante sacrifices legalistic support, but this is often replaced by that of the society within which he operates.

Again, this is clear to see in "Dominoes", where V directs his vigilante activities towards a group of drug dealers, who pose a threat to the safety and security of the community in

[12] As an example of social control Johnston cites examples of young Muslim women being hunted down by the equivalent of bounty hunters, when they try to flee from arranged marriages. Here it is the cultural mores being violated, not any legal prescription, and the offence is community-specific.

which they operate. They act violently and ruthlessly, even inflicting harm on the child Bungee, whose mother is in their debt. Furthermore, they are connected to a violent and influential group of Russian criminals, and though V never discovers the true extent of their criminal activities, it is safe to assume that they are unsavoury characters. So though it is clear that V engages in a form of vigilante crime control, the social control aspect is a bit more problematic to incorporate. The subjectivity of such normative cultural values means that they could be culture – or even community – specific. Enforcing such values through violent means could potentially place a vigilante character much closer to the line of criminality than intended here. For the purposes of the screenplay then, the focus remains on crime control through vigilantist actions.

Finally then, Johnston identifies personal and collective security as the sixth requirement in defining vigilantism. This entails that vigilante activities aim "to offer people the assurance that an established system of order will prevail. Its focus is invariably local and in the majority of forms of vigilante engagement there is a concern to minimize objective threat to persons, property, or values and to reduce associated fear" (Johnston 231). As for the rationale behind these acts, Johnston argues that they arise from the "popular desire to 'do something'", the willingness and determination of the private citizen to protect the security of himself and his community (231). This benevolent motivation which guides the activities of the vigilante is why this character is the heroic protagonist of so much fiction, and why real communities often find themselves aligned with his cause.

Through the repeated mention of the newspaper headlines which adorn the streetlights, I attempted to set the tone of a city or community struggling with a severe crime problem.[13] As a teacher and a concerned and conscientious civilian, V is acutely aware of the troubles which face his community. In his everyday life he tries to improve the situation wherever he can, like taking Bungee into his, admittedly limited, care. Over the weekends he spends some of his time putting up security gates and window bars, literally fortifying his community from those who would threaten their safety and security. So even before V picks up his pipe, he is attempting to "do something". Yet ultimately he is driven to more extreme measures,

[13] It should be noted that most of the headlines are based in reality, with the South African pony presses responsible for the more graphic and disturbing among them.

and his quest to restore a greater sense of security for himself and those around him is what leads V to become a vigilante.

If one considers Johnston's last criterion, namely "a concern to minimize objective threat to persons, property, or values and to reduce associated fear", it is worth mentioning the darker side of it, as when it manifested in South Africa in 2008's burst of xenophobic attacks conducted throughout land. One would be weary of classifying these deeds as vigilantist, although, for the communities in which these attacks took place - mostly poor neighborhoods and informal settlements - it would appear that a vigilante agenda of protection and security manifested as deadly xenophobia with outsiders becoming targets and scapegoats. Definitions of vigilantism and xenophobia become trivial as the line blurs between communal needs and communal deeds. This is just one of many reasons why vigilantism is viewed as controvertial societal conduct. Although this is worth mentioning here, for this paper, I will steer clear of trying to tackle the conundrum that is xenophobia by sticking rather to the textbook vigilante, its representatives in reality, and its creations in fiction.

Through this then, it should become clear what exactly constitutes the nature of the vigilante, his actions, the role he fulfils in his community, as well as the problematic paradox encountered in attempting to either defend or condemn such conduct. Further the descriptions of the screenplay "Dominoes" should have acted as sufficient practical application to further explicate the theoretical framework, while simultaneously creating a clear conceptual point of reference for understanding how the vigilante can be constructed for creative narratives. Despite the fact that Johnston's work was intended to "establish vigilantism as a criminological concept", it proves equally useful in constructing a narrative in the vigilante tradition (Johnston 221). But there is another aspect of the vigilante which I wish to argue here, and for that I need to turn now to the philosophy of anarchy. As will become clear, anarchy engages with vigilantism in several fundamental and significant ways, allowing further understanding of this concept which Johnston and similarly focussed theorists have, to my mind, not broached sufficiently. As will become clear, anarchism can potentially solve the paradox which lies at the heart of vigilantism.

First and foremost, however, the designation "anarchy" needs to discussed, as it is a term which is often prone to gross popular misconception. It is unfortunate that anarchy has come for most to signify the violent and chaotic overthrow of order and the foundations of society. In popular culture, anarchy is often regarded as an ideology of violence and degeneracy and, above all, nihilism, often evoking images of civilization being burned to the ground. In his work *What is Property?*[14] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon states: "The meaning ordinarily attached to the word "anarchy" is absence of principle, absence of rule; consequently, it has been regarded as synonymous with "disorder"" (n.p.). Perhaps the best depiction of this interpretation of the anarchic protagonists in recent Western popular culture is Tyler Durden, the nihilistic antihero and leader of Project Mayhem in the book, and cult film, *Fight Club*.[15] In it, readers and viewers encounter a character whose only mandate is the destruction of the civilized world, a triumphant return to the primitive origins of humankind, a violent overthrow of contemporaneity. One of his most striking lines also clearly encapsulates his perspective of anarchy: "It's only after we've lost everything that we are free to do anything". But though anarchy has been misconstrued as a breakdown of social order, anarchism does not advocate this brand of nihilism and chaos. This is actually far removed from the original philosophy of anarchy, so it is necessary to advance here a coherent, if limited, overview of anarchism.

The term "anarchy", literally translated from its Greek roots, means "without ruler" (OED). Ideologically, the foundations of anarchism in its modern incarnation can be found in William Godwin's publication *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* from 1793. However, for my purposes I will not hark so far back, drawing instead from the anarchists of the 19th century, when anarchism came more fully into it's own, and onwards. As Colin Ward explains, it arose largely in the form of dissenting voices against "the great tide of nationalism in the nineteenth century" (Ward 22). It is an ideology which opposes the centralization of authority and the homogenisation of cultures for national agendas. Instead it proposes a system of civil reconfiguration which

[14] *What is Property: An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*, 1840.
[15] The novel was written by Chuck Palahniuk (1996), and the film adaptation was directed by David Fincher (1999).

functions entirely without the need for hierarchical power structures, be they political, economic or social.[16]

Where the strong nationalising efforts of the 19th and 20th century worked to consolidate the nation-state as a unified and homogenous ideological entity, anarchy worked to counteract this, to divide the nation-state once more into the many diverse elements from which it was historically, and often arbitrarily, constructed. In a discussion of the history of anarchism, Ward states that "[t]he 19th century anarchists, like the whole of the left, assumed that nationalism was a superstition that the 20th century would outgrow" (137). Yet since nationalism and the consolidation of power in the structures of the government are still being pursued by the governments whom it favours, anarchists propose that "[w]e have to free ourselves from national ideologies in order to act locally and think regionally. Both will enable us to become citizens of the whole world, not of nations, nor of trans-national super-states" (Ward 37). The foundations for this great dispersing of power and authoritative structures lies in the contention that such power structures need not exist for human civilization to continue or prosper.

As foundation anarchism acknowledges the natural laws of the sciences, the laws of physics which govern the mechanics of the universe. Bakunin maintains that "[w]e [anarchists] recognize, then, the absolute authority of science, because the sole object of science is mental reproduction, as well-considered and systematic as possible, of the natural laws inherent in the material, intellectual, and moral life of both the physical and the social worlds" (n.p.). This is not to say that society is to entrust societal control to the sciences, but rather that these are the only verifiable and universally acceptable truths which can hold any authority over man. The point is clear to see, as it is impossible to argue against the authoritative role something as fundamental as gravity or the speed of light (to name but two) has in human life. Though we all may not necessarily understand them, and though our knowledge of them may be incomplete, "we cannot disobey them; because they constitute the basis and fundamental conditions of our existence; they envelope us, penetrate us, regulate all our

[16] Admittedly, it is simplistic to speak of anarchism as a singular ideology, as it has many divergent subdivisions, as does most ideologies. However, for my purposes I must simplify this notion and give a broad and generalized account of anarchism without focusing on a specific contingent part thereof.

movements, thoughts, and acts" (Bakunin n.p.). Thus science, ever adaptable and ever scrutinized, provides the only true source of authority over human life. Again, this does not mean that society is to be governed by the institutions of science, as that would corrupt the purpose of science and divert its attention to matters of human governance. It is rather what science can discover about our condition, the laws which govern the universe and all within it, which is acknowledged as sole authority.

What then follows is that any other form of governance or authority must consequently be artificial, is therefore considered to be entirely false, and must thus be rejected. Bakunin expresses this clearly and powerfully: "The liberty of man consists solely of this: that he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognised them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatever, divine or human, collective or individual" (Bakunin n.p.). Anarchism thus only attributes authority to the forces which govern all aspects of the universe, those that apply universally, and as a result is rightly considered to be inherent to every person, equally. Any system which thus presumes to construct and maintain structures of authority that have as mandate the governance of humankind, even when elected through universal suffrage, is a hindrance to the freedom and autonomy of all those under that system. As Bakunin explains, every artificial political, economic or social system of authority is to be considered "equally fatal and hostile to the liberty of the masses from the very fact that they impose upon them a system of external and therefore despotic laws" (n.p). Proudhon perhaps says it most eloquently: "Whatever form it takes – monarchic, oligarchic or democratic – royalty, or the government of man by man, is illegitimate and absurd" (n.p.). But asserting that external authority is absurd is not entirely enough, and it must become clear how the systems of government which rule today are actually argued to be detrimental to the greatest part of humanity. [17]

It is tempting at this point to include a catalogue of all the social evils afflicting the world under the current systems of authority. However, this has been done by several anarchist

[17] It is important to note that anarchism also engages specifically with issues such of labour, trade organization, civil services etc, as must any ideology which proposes an alternative system of societal organization. For my purposes, however, I will focus mostly on the ways in which anarchy engage with issues of governance and state authority.

writers, who I discuss among them, so I will include this short yet scathing summary of government penned by Proudhon:

> To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commanded; all by creatures that have neither the right, nor wisdom, nor virtue.... To be governed means that at every move, operation, or transaction one is noted, registered, entered in a census, taxed, stamped, priced, assessed, patented, licensed, authorized, recommended, admonished, prevented, reformed, set right, corrected. Government means to be subjected to tribute, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolized, extorted, pressured, mystified, robbed; all in the name of public utility and the general good. Then, at the first sign of resistance or word of complaint, one is repressed, fined, despised, vexed, pursued, hustled, beaten up, garrotted, imprisoned, shot, machine-gunned, judged, sentenced, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to cap it all, ridiculed, mocked, outraged, and dishonored. That is government, that is its justice and its morality! . . . O human personality! How can it be that you have cowered in such subjection for sixty centuries?" (Proudhon cited in Guerin 23)

It is not idly that Daniel Guerin includes a section in his *Anarchy: From Theory to Practice*[18] entitled "The Horrors of State", which opens as follows: "The anarchist regards the State as the most deadly of the preconceptions which have blinded men throughout the ages" (23). The greatest problem which arises from the current systems of centralised governance and authority is that the accumulated resources of a nation-state are invested in the mechanics of self-preservation. Every aspect of the state is constructed and continually modified so that it can perpetuate its own existence, and not, as it contends, so that every citizen can reap the benefits of its benevolent rule. Instead of having an end-goal in sight, a society which has advanced so far that it can govern itself effectively, all institutions of power aim to achieve "eternal perpetuation by rendering the society confided to its care ever more stupid and consequently more in need of its government and direction" (Bakunin n.p.). As such, the

[18] First published in French in 1968 and in English in 1970.

state is considered to act only with its own best interests in mind, and the best interest of the citizenry is obscured in the political and bureaucratic confusion.

Furthermore, the distance between those in governing positions of power and those even a small way down the authoritative or socio-economic ladder becomes untenable, and the greater the gap, the less appropriate and sensible it is for such figures of authority to make decisions affecting those below them. Allowing figures so far removed from one to dictate the rules and regulations which govern one's life, invites illegitimate and artificial authority over oneself, which is why Kropotkin contends that the state is an "authority that is fictitiously supposed to represent society" (8). And it is a fiction with truly deleterious implications, as the greatest part of society will never be adequately represented in such a system. This perspective on the state and authority thus calls for the disbandment of these structures, the liberation of the populace from the institutions that feed off their labour and use the spoils for self-preservation.

The alternative offered by anarchism is a system of organisation which relies on localism and regionalism. It conceives of a society organised at ground level, catering more appropriately to the needs of those involved as it is they who do the organising for themselves as the need arises. To use Bakunin's example, anarchists do not reject all authority and organisation: "In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer" (n.p.). Anarchists then do not recognise the "infallible authority" of a state, instead acknowledging authority where it is due, but retaining the freedom to use or disregard it as the situation may warrant (Bakunin n.p.). To replace large homogenised institutions then, anarchism proposes the liberation of autonomous communities, free to organise and care for themselves, knowledgeable as they are of their unique concerns which need to be addressed. A useful account, if admittedly unspecific in practical details, can be found in the opening paragraphs of the entry which Kropotkin was asked to submit to the Encyclopaedia Britannica's eleventh edition.[19] In it he explains that:

[19] 1910 – 1911.

> "harmony in such a society [is] obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being. In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the state in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national and international temporary or more or less permanent - for all possible purposes: production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defence of the territory, and so on; and, on the other side, for the satisfaction of an ever-increasing number of scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs. Moreover, such a society would represent nothing immutable. On the contrary - as is seen in organic life at large - harmony would (it is contended) result from an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences, and this adjustment would be the easier to obtain as none of the forces would enjoy a special protection from the state." (Kropotkin n.p.)

Noble as this notion appears, anarchism has been criticised for being "utopian, formless, primitive, or otherwise incompatible with the realities of a complex society" (Guerin 5). Indeed, it does appear that anarchism relies too heavily on a better class of human and a world in a better condition than this for it to function effectively. Yet what is important, and to my mind the strongest principle to be found in anarchism, is the decentralisation of authority and institutional power. Ward points to contemporary Switzerland as the nation which comes closest to the ideals propounded by anarchist thinkers. Divided into twenty six administrative subdivision, or cantons, it is "a federation of like units, of small cells, [with] cantonal boundaries [that] cut across linguistic and ethnic boundaries so that, unlike the many unsuccessful federations, the confederation is not dominated by one or a few powerful units" (Ward n.p.). Without a strong central state wielding homogenising authority, the populace experience a greater degree of autonomy, and see authority being utilised more

directly to the needs of each relatively unique canton. But Switzerland is the exception, not the rule, and though this system appears to work quite effectively for them, it has not been adopted globally.

So though anarchism has some valuable contributions to make to the field of politics and state organisation, it has been largely disregarded or misunderstood. Effectively, the baby is thrown out with the bathwater, and the legitimate criticism that anarchism directs at nationalism is largely disregarded along with the potentially beneficial alternatives it advances. But for my argument I must focus on this notion of the large scale dispersing of authority and resources. This is then also where I find the significant correlation between vigilantism and anarchism. If, as those I draw on contend, the large institutions of authority and governance which dominates global culture at this point continues to prove itself extremely ineffectual in using their authority for the benefit of all, should that authority not rather be discontinued? Would those whose livelihoods are affected by these unwieldy and ineffectual governments not dramatically improve if they were to take that authority for themselves? And this is the key to the vigilante. Vigilantism arises exactly when the arguments of anarchism prove to be true. While the ideology of anarchism proposes that the populace personally wields the authority we currently entrust to the state, the vigilante does exactly that, usurping the functions of the state so that it may be implemented to greater effect for the benefit of the community. As such then, the vigilante is the brother of the anarchist, even if unbeknownst to either party. Although he is only concerned with a single aspect of state authority, that of ensuring the safety and security of the citizenry, the vigilante nevertheless proves to be an implicit anarchist, putting into practice what the other preaches.

Vigilantism, I maintain, is a naturally occurring instance of anarchism. When the state proves ineffectual, or is perceived by those dependent on its authority to be ineffectual, the citizens must act on their own behalf. If then, as the anarchist argues, the state is ineffective by its very constitution, vigilantism is one of the inevitable occurrences of society and the vigilante is effectively an agent of anarchy. It is in the failings of the state - in this case the inability of the police to guarantee and defend the safety and security of each individual community - that the autonomous citizen assumes the authority previously entrusted to the

state, breaking the laws of the state so that the needs of the community can better be met. The mandate of anarchism proposes that each aspect of societal organisation, "mutual protection" and the "defence of the territory" included, can more effectively be managed on a smaller scale, catering to the specific problems and requirements which arises in each community or region (Kropotkin n.p.). Gone is the need for a centralised institution of security and policing, replaced by vigilantism on a basis regulated by the idiosyncratic needs of each community of autonomous individuals. Who better to police the community than those who make up its rank and file, who better to safeguard the region than those who know it intimately, those who are the victims of the crime, those who have the greatest impetus to see such troubling activities resolved. To put it simply, what is considered vigilantism today could potentially be the primary way in which an anarchist society would ensure the safety and security of its citizens.

Without repeating too much of my argument thus far, it is nevertheless useful here to show how anarchy engages with the aspects of vigilantism previously identified. Here then is a summary definition which Johnston provides to encapsulate the requirements he sets forth for identifying vigilantism: [20]

> Vigilantism is a social movement giving rise to [1] premeditated [2] acts of force – or threatened force – by [3 and 4] autonomous citizens. It arises as a [5] reaction to the transgression of institutionalized norms by individuals or groups – or to their potential or imputed transgression. Such acts are focussed on crime control and/or social control and [6] aim to offer assurances (or 'guarantees') of security both to participants and to other members of a given established order. (Johnston 232)

As an ideology, anarchism overlaps quite neatly with this definition. To explain, I must outline how vigilantism can be incorporated into a community organised along anarchistic avenues, while showing how each of Johnston's elements finds a correlative in anarchist theory. As will become clear, the anarchic community is exactly where a vigilante would find the paradox of his nature resolved, while at the same time filling a much needed niche in society. Firstly, the acts of the vigilante are premeditated [1]. Should the vigilante thus be

[20] The numerical values 1-6 have been added so that I may revisit them in that order below.

incorporated into an anarchist system of organisation, it would be fair to assume that this method of regional protection and safeguarding would be tailored to coincide with the needs of each specific community. It would not entail a disordered free-for-all in which every citizen can embark on vigilantist activities or personal vendettas. Instead, the community would formulate a local body of vigilant agents, who would act on an *ad hoc* basis as the community requires, with popular consent required to limit and direct the objective of such activities against those who pose a legitimate threat to safety and security. The minimal planning which Johnston requires would be easy to fulfil, as the vigilante would know the community, its geography, its people, and be more than able to put that knowledge to good use. Moreover [2], the threat or use of force would be dictated by each situation. Violence would only be necessary to address those transgressors who pose a violent threat, the violence ending as soon as the situation is resolved.

Further it is exactly anarchism's focus on the autonomy of citizens which makes it coincide here with vigilantism. By its very nature [3], anarchy would have nothing but private agents and [4] autonomous citizens, which would mean that the policing would be solely undertaken in a way currently considered to be vigilantist. There would not be any state in a form which is recognisable today, so there would not be any state institution to regulate such matters, nor state agents to perform these tasks. Additionally, the compulsion to act would not be regulated by a homogenised legal system, but rather by the personages affected by the instances of transgression. For the same reason that there will not be lawmen, it would be incorrect to talk of criminals, as there would not be an all-encompassing system of legislation to label them as such. Instead there would be those who do not adhere to the norms of the community on question.

This ties in closely to what are perhaps the greatest advantages of such a system; [5] that the vigilante action would most clearly be directed at the transgressions which offend each particular community. Anarchism gives a freer rein for the community to evolve along the lines which determine the sensibilities of its individuals. Should a community, with institutionalised norms and values which are much more clearly defined than those of the nation-state, decide that its norms are being violated, there is communal impetus to intervene through vigilante action. The shifting and impermanent mores of the community would be

clearly reflected in those activities which become problematic and are addressed through such interventional methods. Again, the Othering which assists in identifying the vigilante is apparent here. The nature of each community would become more fully developed by concretising what it deems to be unfit for its safe and proper functioning. Whereas this is similar to current nationwide legislation, for an anarchist community there would be more freedom for fluctuation. As the community develops and the norms of its constituent individuals shift, this would be reflected in the altered focus of vigilante action. So it becomes not only a matter of personal safety, [6] but rather the protection of the community against the violation of the norms it wishes to uphold; the communal guarantee of security and the maintenance of its fluctuating norms. Popular consent dictates what behaviour is tolerated and what is condemned; true grass-roots democracy at work, albeit under a different name.

Whether then the state proves ineffectual in providing the safekeeping required by a contemporary community, or falls by the wayside in the creation of an anarchic society, the vigilante will survive the transition with little or no change to his constitution. The vigilante will remain a character who acts in the defence of the community of which he is a part. Where previously there were police, an anarchist society would have a loosely constituted body of vigilantes, acting not under the sanction of the law but under the mandate of the community of which they are a part. The paradoxical vigilante, who breaks the laws and assumes the power reserved for the state, would no longer pose such a paradox. If popular consent dictates the actions of the vigilante, and there are no homogenous laws which the vigilante must transgress in the fulfilment of his activities, this character becomes less problematic. Instead of being outlawed for acting in the interests of the community, the vigilante will be required and enlisted for that selfsame behaviour.

This merging of anarchism and vigilantism then offers an additional way for understanding the nature of the vigilante, and by drawing on the tenets of anarchy the paradoxes inherent to this character can be better unravelled. What remains then is to explain how this notion of "anarcho-vigilantism" finds traction in a contemporary South African climate dominated by an increasingly ineffectual state with a growing catalogue of failing service delivery, not least of which is its inability to address the crime which runs so rampant. The rivalries and

infighting which riddles the government, the ongoing power struggle between the ANC and its Youth League, the petty squabbles between those parties vying for political power, all contribute to greatly impede those involved from effectively performing the tasks they were elected to fulfil. While politicians serve politics, and the state fights tooth and nail to preserve the state, the population is left to fend for itself, minus a great deal of resources which could have been better utilized. It truly seems as if the country burns while the bureaucrats and officials in power act in their own best interests. No stronger evidence is needed than the alarmingly large number of reported cases of state officials who spend taxpayer's money on matters which bear only personal benefit.[21] Growing concern has been mounting nationwide over the lack of efficient service delivery, with destructive riots increasing in frequency. Of the basic services not being sufficiently provided, the one of import here and one of the most worrisome is the provision of safety and security through the use of policing.

In his article on post-1994 vigilantism in South Africa Anthony Minnaar argues that one of the main contributing factors to the ongoing increase in violent (often horrific) instances of vigilantism is the anger and frustration of the communities involved. There is a growing distrust among communities in the state's ability to safeguard its citizens, and vigilante actions are "symptomatic of a breakdown in the criminal justice system as well as effective policing" (Minnaar 12). He continues to explain: "It has been the experience of ordinary people that if cases are reported to the police very often nothing happens (due more to police manpower shortages, case overload, and police being overworked). Furthermore, if a suspect is apprehended the overloaded judicial system might well see the case being indefinitely postponed" (Ibid). To further complicate the situation "ludicrously lenient bail terms" are often set for offenders who subsequently return to the streets largely unhindered (Ibid). It is entirely unsurprising then that the communities act out of fear, frustration and anger. According to Minnaar, the situation in some areas had deteriorated to such an extent "that not only were individuals taking the law into their own hands but social workers and

[21] Perhaps one of the most publicised examples would be Minister Sicelo Shiceka who, among other things, "went to Switzerland in December 2008 to visit his then girlfriend, SAA air hostess Phumla Masilela, who was in jail in Switzerland on a drug-related offence, while pretending to be on an official visit "on World Cup duties" (Afrika and Hofstatter n.p.). The entire trip, as has been widely reported, was financed by the taxpayer's money.

councellors [sic] were now advising traumatised victims not to even bother laying charges as nothing would happen to redress the crime" (14).

In light of these failings, there has been a marked increase in vigilante activities throughout the affected areas.[22] These activities range from physical attacks and killings to community courts that meted out their own style of justice, which were often equally gruesome and deadly in the execution of their sentences. But the relative effectiveness, or at the very least the popular perception that something was being done to address the criminal elements in the communities, meant a growing support for this kind of vigilantism. Minnaar's statistics "indicate that vigilante actions enjoy, for many reasons, considerable community support or certainly some overt or covert condonation of it" (22). Consequently, both in rural and urban areas, there is evidence that a "significant portion of society", those who grow "despondent as a result of the high levels of crime and the state's apparent inability to combat it effectively, increasingly [give] their support to [...] vigilante organisations" (Minnaar 22). There is a clear inverse correlation: the less trustworthy the authority of the state becomes, the more trust is placed in the authority of the autonomous citizenry. In South Africa then, there is growing popular support of vigilantism which matches the declining support for and from the state.

And this phenomenon is gaining global momentum. Over the past year the news was dominated by evidently anarchist uprisings of the citizens who had become extremely dissatisfied with the depths that politics have fallen to. What has become known as the "Arab Spring" was essentially the populaces of several North African countries refusing to acknowledge the authority which their distinctive states wielded to the detriment of the people. The "Occupy Movement" is fundamentally also a call for the fairer distribution of authority and resources, the "99%" vocalising the belief that governments are betraying their citizens. Another interesting example is the amorphous internet collective known as "Anonymous", who have embarked on a series of hacking attacks on government institutions to combat legislation which would afford greater governmental authority over the internet.[23]

[22] For his study Minnaar focused largely on the Eastern Cape, though he draws similarities to other rural areas and informal settlements throughout the country.

[23] It is interesting to note that the internet has naturally developed as perhaps the most anarchistic platforms in history, with global interaction based around a format which is largely void of any centralised authority.

Anonymous have even adopted the "V" masks from the film *V for Vendetta*[24] when appearing in broadcasts or in public, a clear indication that they find an ideological connection to the masked anarchistic protagonist of the film whose cause it is to fight a corrupt and authoritarian state. Considering the close relationship between the vigilante and the anarchist, the distinction between the two seems to disappear entirely when the government appears increasingly to be responsible for transgressing the acceptable norms of the individual communities which constitute the state. If the government becomes criminal in the eyes of the population, then every private individual can effectively become a vigilante, which could result in nations of anarchists and vigilantes. Globally the call for a more autonomous interaction of the people is becoming louder and louder, anarchy appears to be on the rise.

Though it is becoming all the more evident that the global populace is acting out against its respective governments due to immense frustration with unsatisfactory authority, it remains unclear where this will lead. The possibility exists that those in power will cling ever tighter to what they have, using force to suppress those who defy them, as is the case with most of the current anti-government movements. On the other hand, there is the possibility for the great liberation which anarchists so desire. And there would be no need for a violent revolution, if the greatest portion of the populace openly admits the nature of state authority to be artificial and illegitimate, it would be very difficult to wield power which no one acknowledges. I previously mentioned that anarchism is often critiqued for being utopian, but Kropotkin argues differently: "Far from living in a world of visions and imagining men better than they are, we [anarchists] see them as they are; and that is why we affirm that the best of men is made essentially bad by the exercise of authority" (18). It is then not the utopian belief that humankind can be better; it is rather the belief that humankind is being held back by a broken system of organisation. And more people seem to be catching on to the same idea.

Ultimately, the future could hold the rise of the anarchic state, with greater liberty for individuals and the freedom of self-governance. In such a society, the vigilante and the anarchist will find their places. The anarchist will find a society which reflects his ideologies,

[24] 2006. Directed by James McTeigue.

while the vigilante will find a society in which his actions do not pose a problematic paradox. As characters who envision a better world, less criminal, less corrupt, it would perhaps be advisable to see their ideologies put into practice. I leave the last words to V (from *V for Vendetta*): "The people should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people".

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