

Left Behind

A SYMPOSIUM BY CONTINUOUS PROJECT

Guest Speaker: Joshua Dubler, Princeton University

Host: Pacemaker, Paris

Our evening commences at Pacemaker's ground floor apartment in the 11th arrondissement. Gathered around the kitchen table over copious amounts of food and drink are representatives of Bernadette Corporation, Claire Fontaine, and three-fourths of Continuous Project. The guest speaker is Mr. Joshua Dubler, lately of the Department of Religion at Princeton University. On the periphery, music plays loud enough to listen to but not too loud so as to distract. Periodically Loba, an exuberant terrier, races through yipping.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY: So, Continuous Project has asked me to say something about the phenomenon or family of phenomena known as *Left Behind*, a phenomenon that sits at the intersection of art and politics, but not one that we often frequent. Secondly, I don't know if this is an experiment in form or in content. I guess we'll find out. I do what I'm about to do with some measure of hesitation, for lots of reasons that needn't be articulated but for one that does need to be articulated, which is the problem of how to critique the other, in this case, an other that I see as paranoid, Manichean, and dangerous. How to critique the other without falling prey to those same sensibilities in one's own group?

So, in talking about this stuff, here's some of the stages that we might go through, and I don't know how it's possible to go beyond these stages: first, we're going to marvel at the freak show and then, second, if we want to endow it with a level of gravity, we'll speak in grave tones about the specter of what this phenomenon represents. It's going to be hard to get beyond this, because I think, one: they are freaks, and two: they are scary. This is where Bettina's objection earlier—I was so on board with it; I always want to entertain the notion that just because they over there are freaks and they're scary, that doesn't mean that we are not also freaks and scary. I don't have the actual *Left Behind* books because I didn't want to purchase them because I didn't want to support it. I think that's interesting that I don't have the books, and call attention to that. But, I do have these books *about* the books that you can look at so you know that I'm not making this all up.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You really didn't buy *Left Behind* for the same reason that one might not go to that Mel Gibson movie?

PRINCETON: Yeah, for a variety of reasons, but for the reason that one wouldn't go to the Mel Gibson movie also. I actually bought *Left Behind* once before, to give to an Australian friend who didn't believe me. I felt like buying one book and adding to their numbers, in this age where you vote with your pocketbook and you get counted in that way. I didn't want to be counted twice. I could have bought it used, but I'm also quite lazy.

So, anyway, *Left Behind* is a series of currently twelve books, though there are more sequels and prequels in the works that are written by two guys. One is called Tim LaHaye; he's a minister in his eighties, he's written other books, like a sex manual with his wife he wrote for a Christian audience. The other guy is named Jerry Jenkins, who has written over one hundred and fifty books, not high-brow. In addition these have been made into movies that have been released, not very successfully, but the movies star—as a punch line—Kirk Cameron. Remember him? He was a TV child-

star in the eighties. And, actually, Louis Gossett Jr. They did this strategy, actually, when they released the first movie in 2002; they sent out videocassettes or DVDs first so as to raise buzz. It was an experiment that failed; only like 2.6 million people went to see it in the theater. However, in terms of these books, of which there are twelve, there have been sixty million sold since the books started coming out in the mid-nineties. So, how many is that? It's well fewer than *Harry Potter*, which has sold over a quarter of a billion books, but is the same number of books, roughly—a little more—than John Grisham sold in the nineties, and it's more than one and a half times what Stephen King sold in the nineties. So it's a significant number of books. I assume that to most of you—maybe not Wade, because of where he's from—this stuff will be rather... No, from mass culture you'll know about it, and we'll zero back in to explain some of the details, though I'm not interested in—I can explain more of the details if you're curious. But the series takes place between the Rapture and Jesus' return, so you have the Rapture and then the seven years of Tribulation, culminating with the defeat of the Antichrist, and then Jesus comes back. So, briefly... I've culled Amazon, I can give you in two and a half minutes an entire synopsis of the entire series, and then we'll move on from there, okay? It grows sparser as we move down the series.

One: Piloting his 747, Rayford Steel is musing about his wife's Irene's irritating religiosity and contemplating the charms of his, quote, drop dead gorgeous flight attendant Hattie. First Irene was into Amway, then Tupperware, and now it's the Rapture of the saints, the scary last story in the Bible in which Christians are swept to heaven and unbelievers are left behind to endure the Antichrist's Tribulation. Steel believes he'll put the plane on autopilot and go visit Hattie, but Hattie's in a panic. Some of the passengers have disappeared. The Rapture has happened. Abruptly, driverless cars are crashing all over, and the slick sinister Romanian Nicolai Carpathia plans to use the UN to establish One World Government and religion. This is all verbatim from Amazon. Resembling a quote, young Robert Redford, and silver-tongued in nine languages, Carpathia is named People's Sexiest Man Alive. Meanwhile, Steel teams up with Buck Williams—that's Kirk Cameron's character—a buck-the-system newshound, to form the Tribulation Force, an underground of left behind penitents battling the Antichrist. Now, these terms—we'll discuss these terms later, but just go with it, for the time being.

Two: So, these left behind penitents form Tribulation Force, and they study the Bible and determine that, in fact, what's happened is that the righteous have been Raptured and that we're in the seven-year-period before Christ returns, and they set about to spread

the word of the truth. I have down "spread the word of the truth of the Word," with the second "word" being capitalized. Nicolai Carpathia, the Romanian who calls to mind Robert Redford, not incidentally, takes over the United Nations, signs a peace treaty with Israel, and begins to lure the nations of Earth together to form one global village. Nicolai Carpathia becomes the focus as he continues to consolidate his power, unifying political states into the global community, unifying media into Global Community Network and *Global Weekly*, and unifying religions into this One World faith under himself as supreme pontiff.

Three, and again, we'll go faster: Our heroes, pilot Rayford Steel and the journalist Buck Williams, along with the Tribulation Force, continue their struggle to survive and protect their families in the midst of global war and destruction. They have come to recognize Nicolai Carpathia to be the Antichrist prophesied in the Bible.

Four: It becomes apparent that the chaos and turmoil created by Nicolai are the fulfillment of John's prophesy of the Seven Seals, as recorded in the book of Revelation. And it becomes also apparent they are now facing the sixth seal, a great earthquake, which is sometimes called the Wrath of the Lamb.

Five: Having survived the Wrath of the Lamb, a global earthquake in the twenty-first month of the Tribulation, pilot Rayford Steel and reporter Buck Williams now embark on a journey of absorbing adventure and Christian triumph. This is some bait for you people—no, this is bait for me, sorry: believers are increasingly relying on the Internet for underground communication, and most of them are becoming more and more tempted by violence as a way of battling the forces of evil overtaking the world. But demon locusts are shortly dispatched as a divine plague to attack those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Meanwhile, book six: Carpathia has been busy rebuilding roads, airports, and a cellular solar satellite phone system, all designed to help him become supreme ruler of the world, and even claim himself to be God. We also find ace reporter Buck Williams anonymously preaching to the masses of believers and converts through his cyberspace magazine, *The Truth*. For his part, and this is book seven, Carpathia is assassinated, but only to, in book eight, rise from the dead; as the world responds in awe, statues of the potentate and god are erected in every major city, and a new religion, Carpathianism, dominates.

Nine: twenty-nine days into the Great Tribulation, and a newly resurrected Carpathia evinces an increasing fondness for gruesome killing.

Ten: a million strong, the faithful gather in Petra to await Christ's return, only to be bombed by the forces of the one-world-community.

Meanwhile, Chicago is also destroyed. Eleven is the battle of Armageddon and the martyrdom of Buck Williams. Twelve: Jesus returns at last, vanquishing his foes and ushering in a new Millennium of peace and righteousness. Of the entire Tribulation Force, only Ray Steel is still alive to experience it.

So, what to make of all this? And this is really where I'm serving as a translator to people who I presumed

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Sounds exactly like this novel by Jack London called *The Iron Heel*, a Communist novel. You could replace all the religious things with Communism and you would have the exact same kind of format in his book, called *The Iron Heel*. Chicago was also destroyed in that book.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Maybe it's based on it.

PRINCETON: H—E—E—L?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: *The Iron Heel*, by Jack London.

PRINCETON: I'll check it out.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, you should check it out.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT:

Somewhere between that and Tolkien.

PRINCETON: Hey, you guys are stealing my thunder! Context one is very recognizable; this is American Hollywood Manichean schlock in general. This is good versus evil. This is *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings*, Reagan's Evil Empire, Bush's Axis of Evil... and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: And Marx and Hegel.

PRINCETON: And Marx and Hegel. Context two is this specific American, but increasingly global, religious context. So, I don't know if you know the category of Evangelicals. But we're talking about denominations like Baptist, Methodist, some Presbyterians, some Pentecostals, and some Mormons. I personally don't believe in treating religion as principally a matter of belief, but most people do, and Evangelicals do. So, according to the scholars and the Evangelicals, here's what defines an Evangelical. There are four characteristics. One is emphasis on the conversion experience, also called "being saved," or a "new birth," or "born again," after the gospel of John, third chapter, third verse. Second, the Protestant canon of the Bible is the primary, or perhaps *only*, source of religious authority. So, emerging at the end of the nineteenth century, in opposition to high-brow biblical criticism, people on the left, liberal Christians beginning to take the Bible apart and seeing how it was written, and inspired by Darwinism, these people dug their heels in and professed to be biblical literalists. So the word of the Bible is all you need.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: That's heresy from the beginning of Christianity, also. Already there were certain sects saying, "We don't follow the word of Rome, we do what we want." That was the source of the major heretical movement. You're talking about John of Leyden, or Nicholas Allen, et cetera, all these peasant revolts, which come from the Jewish tradition. The notion of the Antichrist and the kingdom of Heaven on Earth was already a kind of political factor. It's like: we're oppressed; we'll see a day when our oppressors are dumbed down. There's a long heritage here, with that. The interesting thing for me, though, is that now you don't have the control factor. You don't have the control factor of the church. The Catholic Church? Rome?

Compared to the Evangelicals, it does not exist. So, where do they exist? In what space do they exist? In what space do they create their notions of the world, or their notions of being saved, or apocalypse, et cetera? That was always the major thing, the notion of the heretical thing, even for the Protestant. If I can imagine Americans today—Evangelicals, Baptists, whatever, I lack the words for it—they have no opposition, they're free from that! So, what do they refer to? They refer to media, to a discussion of certain problems. It's a question. Hearing all these twelve chapters, which sound so *old* to me, they sound like from thousands of years ago, it's not so shocking.

PRINCETON: Some of it's old, and some of it's new. I think we can return to the question of whether the Evangelicals... They would certainly see themselves as being free from the institution of the church, and certainly their own understanding is a very populist understanding, but, I don't know—thinking about an individual who would come of age within that tradition. I don't know if that *individual* is any more free.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, but the Church is weak, that's the whole thing. The Church is not there to really give it to them, if they falter. They're not going to pay with their lives for this. They can do this rather freely. And then it becomes a question of greater political manipulation... Not manipulation, communication.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: And along with that, it's that they're in some sense given strength, or

even sheltered, by the fact that the President of the United States is one of them.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Who can pass a few words to them, as you say, secretly, as he does...

PRINCETON: Should we return to this and get this over with?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, yeah, please.

PRINCETON: So, that was the first two characteristics. I'm giving you a thumbnail sketch. The first is, you have this radical Rapture conversion experience—this comes out of the Anabaptists—that it's not just enough to be born a Christian, you have to—something has to *happen* to you. Then, the Bible is the primary source of authority. The third characteristic is the encouragement of Evangelism, meaning to witness to other people one's walk in Christ. The fourth is a focus on Christ's redeeming work on the cross. So, unlike the liberal tradition that began to think of Christianity as one way to salvation among many, they emphasize that without the particular forgiveness for your sins that Christ gives you, there's no salvation. Depending on how the question is framed, somewhere between 25 and 45 percent of Americans report themselves as either born again or Evangelicals.

PACEMAKER: (sudden intake of breath).

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: This is also true of one of the artists Dia showed in the last few years.

PRINCETON: So, religiously, politically, ethnically, in every way, there's tremendous variety. But as a general trend, of the 50 percent that vote, they vote Republican at a ratio of three to one. So, to respond to the question of how *new* this phenomenon is... On the one hand, this idea that we're in the final days is something that has been part of Christianity since before it was Christianity. I mean, John the Baptist, and Paul: to these characters... Christianity was born in a moment where many people thought that the world was not going to be around much longer. Where this particular phenomenon is new, it's enabled by the Protestant Reformation, in that, after the Protestant Reformation, and then especially in America, putting religious authority in the Bible is taking it out of the hands of a centralized church institution. So, individuals on the ground have much more power to develop orthodoxies.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What's an orthodoxy in that sense? A system of belief?

PRINCETON: I mean in the sense that...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: A temporary autonomous power.

PRINCETON: The notion of the Tribulation comes from one very poetic chapter in the book of Revelations. The notion of the Rapture

comes from one sentence. But for people who are reading these books, even though they recognize them to be fiction, they see themselves as literalists who are going only by the Bible. Yet they have an entire infrastructure of meaning that is not in the Bible.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They take it on faith that all that stuff is actually in that one sentence.

PRINCETON: Yes. And the justification is—there's a circularity. In book 14 of the gospel of John, when Christ leaves, he says that he's leaving the Holy Ghost with you to comfort you.

And the way this is read through Luther, into American Evangelicalism, is that the text is written to be understood, and the meaning is plain. Okay? So, you know that your reading of the text is correct by *how it feels*. So when you're brought up in a certain way of reading the text, and then you read the text *again*, the initial meanings that were inscribed into the text "feel" correct. According to them, it's the individual Christian who's been given this ability to see, by Christ, that makes the text readable and understandable. Does that make sense?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Mm-hmm.

PRINCETON: So, they would not say—did I use the word orthodoxy, or doctrine, or something?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You said orthodoxy.

PRINCETON: They would not use that word at all. So from the outside it looks less like the American Evangelical is more free to read the text how he wants to, and more that he has an ideology of being free. But the meaning is bounded just as it would be bounded if you were reading it in the Catholic context. They *do* read the thing.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Where's your wine?

PRINCETON: I'm drinking coffee now. So, this particular way... Give me two more minutes. This particular way of reading these books... The key books for these groups, in thinking about the end of time, are books like Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah, which are Old Testament books from a couple of hundred, three hundred, four hundred years before Jesus, which are difficult, opaque. To our eyes they would look like they were trading in metaphor.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm sorry, this is really naive and stupid, but the Old Testament has parts that came before the birth of Jesus Christ?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: All of it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: All of it's before!

(laughter)

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Really?

Sorry. Note to self: "shut up."

PRINCETON: Even calling it "Old Testament" is subscribing to a Christian supersessionism because—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

Mary's cunt is Old Testament.

PRINCETON: The key book for these people is the book of Revelation, which—the author, according to the text, is John of Patmos; for believers, that is the same John as John who wrote the gospel of John. There are four gospels that tell the story—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: For scholars, it's not the same John.

PRINCETON: For scholars— well, I don't even know if they think there *was* a John. But for scholars, the book was written in around the year 95.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When was the gospel of John?

PRINCETON: I think it was around the same time. John is the last gospel. The others come from around the year 60 or so, and that one, I think, is around the same time. Anyway, over time, the book of Revelation has been read in a number of different ways. Some have read it as prophecy describing stuff that actually happened in the first century. Some read it as prophecy that is describing events from the first century until the second coming of Christ. And some—and that's this group, the Left Behind people—see it as describing some future time, shortly before the Second Coming. Okay? So it's *that* context that allows someone like Pat Robertson to say that the Antichrist is probably alive today and he's probably a Jewish male. The folks who are reading *Left Behind...* there's a whole alphabet soup of different possibilities. These key events are, just quickly: the Millennium, Tribulation, Rapture, and these "dispensations." So, in turn: "Millennium" is the thousand years. The text actually says that there will be a thousand years.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: "The text" being the Bible?

PRINCETON: The text in that case is the book of Revelation, in chapter twenty.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So we're zooming in now on the book of Revelation.

PRINCETON: That's where all this stuff is happening. These are, like, four books among fifty, and they are... Very small parts of it are taken out of context. So, the Millennium is... The way it's going to work is this. There's going to be—most Christians have these sorts of categories—there's a Millennium, which is a thousand years of peace while Christ will reign on Earth, before the end of time. That one is fairly common. Traditionally, you have postmillennialists and premillennialists. Nineteenth-century America was dominated by postmillennialism. Postmillennialism means that Christ will come at the end of the Millennium. Which means that we might be living in the Millennium now. Which means that our good deeds could be part of bringing about the end of the world. In a good way. The abolitionists who ended slavery were like that, the Quakers, who

began the modern prison. Social reformers have long been, on the liberal side, associated with postmillennialism. Premillennialism, it's said, is a far more pessimistic idea, because it means that Christ doesn't come until the beginning of the Millennium, and there's nothing we can do to have any impact on—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So it's like, "why do good deeds"?

PRINCETON: Exactly. So it leads traditionally to a certain kind of withdrawing from the world. So, the nineteenth century. You had a few premillennial groups in the nineteenth century, groups like the Millerites, who prophesied that the world was going to end in 1844, and then it didn't, and that was called "The Great Disappointment." And they became the Seventh Day Adventists, who maybe you've heard of. Postmillennialism was really prominent, even among these Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians. There's this guy John Nelson Darby, who's in the 1820s, in England, and he first theorizes what's called "premillennial dispensationalism." The point of it is this—and this is the idea that becomes really popular at the end of the twentieth century, and is the framework in which all these people are acting—Dispensationalism is something that answers the following problem for a Christian: in the Old Testament you have one law, and then in the New Testament you have a different law.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You mean a contradictory law?

PRINCETON: Yeah, that's the premise of the New Testament, that the law of Moses was just—this is according to Paul, the first great evangelist of Christianity—that the law of Moses was just there to be our custodian until Christ came. And now that Christ has come—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So, it was a provisional law?

PRINCETON: Yeah. Now that Christ has come, we've moved from living by the law to living by grace. Rather than just following rules, we now are the recipients of Christ's forgiveness. That's the message of the New Testament. It's a message of love, over and against the Old Testament, in which you have to toe the line, it's a vengeful God, et cetera. So anyway, this guy Darby, he invents this theology of Dispensation, of which there are seven dispensations. Like, Adam is thrown out of the garden, the patriarch, et cetera, et cetera... We're in the sixth dispensation, and the seventh dispensation will be this period at the end. (pause) I haven't heard this song in so long... So, the Tribulation is going to be this period that occurs before the Millennium. Again, you have this wide variety of opinion. You have people who think that the Tribulation—that Christ will come at the beginning of the Tribulation, that Christ will come in the middle of the Tribulation. The tribulation is based on two passages

somewhere in the book of Revelation, in which they talk about forty-two months here, and they talk about 1,260 days here. I mean, it's *very* obscure. None of this would lend itself to anything that would be...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Quantifiably correct.

PRINCETON: Or beyond dispute. Thank you. For those like this guy Darby, and like most Americans, this 25 to 45 percent of Americans at this time—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Do you have reason to believe that it's closer to one end of that spectrum than the other?

PRINCETON: No.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It really is unclear?

PRINCETON: Yeah. I have no idea about quantifying anything. Anyway, for them, the Tribulation is going to occur... Excuse me. The Tribulation is to be kicked off by the Rapture. The Rapture, which is first named in the Latin Vulgate in 405 AD, is based on one sentence in Thessalonians, in which "to rapture" means you're going to be carried away. It's from the same root as "rape." According to this end-times schema, which was developed in the nineteenth century, first you're going to have the Rapture, in which the righteous are going to be taken right up. And it's those who are *not* saved that are going to have to live through the seven years of Tribulation. Then, at the end of this Tribulation, you will have Jesus coming and instituting the Millennium. Does that all make sense?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, it sounds like Bolshevism for Stalin.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm getting a little bit lost in the details.

PRINCETON: That's okay. We're done with the details.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But what characterizes the Tribulation other than the time frame, and being... Is there a quality to that period?

PRINCETON: Yeah, it's a terrible time.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's the moment of taking of power, basically. The people who came up with this concept—which is well before the Christians, Jews already had it too, because they were fucking occupied before Jesus Christ ever made his face shown on the Earth—they had this hope, and this thing, like, "okay, at some point, God will come down and make everything correct," and Tribulation means revolution, basically. Things will happen, things have turned over, we take over. Et cetera.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's a long, bloody period, with a good outcome.

PRINCETON: Basically. That was the kind of hope for it.

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What is new about this movement? You can trace a lot of things that are not new about it...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But this movement—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What's new—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: This movement—sorry to interrupt you—what's new is that it's not dependent on something else, it exists on its own, in a kind of, like, imaginary image realm, or whatever—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, but it's deeply dependant on media, and—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: What it boils down to is, these people aren't thinking about—they're just thinking about, "Okay, yeah, seventies, sixties, black people with guns in the street... Okay, we want to live quietly and peacefully."

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I disagree. I think there are probably people across the political spectrum who think like that. But my impression was that what's new about this is a dependence on media. And also the idea that there is going to be acceptance from the dominant political structures, and that they can rely on that. Including media structures.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But you're talking about the people who like *Left Behind...* Because I would equate—obviously, we could all equate—any whatsoever right-wing American Christian, and any whatsoever radical Islam thing, as all the same...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But I'm just wondering, what's *not* the same? What makes it *not* something that's recurring in the Christian landscape, and something that's *not* the same as Islamic fundamentalism?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I would say it's a question of wishing to have power, but not wanting to take responsibility for it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: And that's new?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's like, "There should be someone better taking over." Which is really, in my opinion, fascist. "There should be someone else controlling things in a better way than we could do.

And we don't want to do it. We don't give a fuck about!"—I'm talking "we" in a basic Islamic fundamentalist, or fundamentalist Christian American sense—"we don't want to think about these things."

PRINCETON: In fact, it's quite the opposite.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: They have social systems, these Christians?

PRINCETON: What it's about, just as a general point, I think we could agree—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Islam has social systems; they're very clear about that.

PRINCETON: I lean also toward saying everything is the same, but each singularity is a singularity. Each thing that occurs in historical time—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Right, each repetition is a singularity.

PRINCETON: Yeah, there are things that are unique about it, but the idea is that God can come at any time, so you have to be ready. And the way that you're ready is by living your life righteously.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

Okay, but how does living your life righteously relate to others?

PRINCETON: It means having your relationship with Jesus in place, and it means doing the best you can to facilitate that relationship for others.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Is that a relationship with yourself?

PRINCETON: It's not an abdication of social responsibility.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, it's very much social responsibility.

PRINCETON: It's an utter embracing of social responsibility.

(banging, clatter, as small table is knocked over)

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Oh my God, I like artists who—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Sorry.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: That's why Islam is so much better than Christianity, they took social responsibility to another level. They really implicated it. They were really fucking serious. Everywhere they went, it was like a conscious effort to create things, systems, let people live—we feed people in this way, the economy is regulated this way...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Nothing's broken.

PRINCETON: Let me finish up, and then we'll bring it back to exactly where we were before this digression. Skipping to the chase: so, about these books, you see that people—there's a *Left Behind* manual that's also sold, that people are told to buy and leave in their house, such that, if and when they're Raptured, those who

are left behind will understand what to do.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Have you looked at that?

PRINCETON: I haven't seen that yet.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When people are left behind, what are they supposed to do?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Or are they even *supposed* to do anything? They're supposed to die in their own vomit.

PRINCETON: Over the course of the seven-year Tribulation, if you can get right with God, you're still going to have to suffer tremendously, but then, at the end of time, when everyone's resurrected, you'll be in Heaven.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: So there is potential for redemption.

PRINCETON: There is potential for redemption, but not without tremendous suffering.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It sounds like a video game.

PRINCETON: But this is, of course... One of the key things is that the state of Israel is really important to these people and Jews are these special allies. But Jews will either have to convert or be destroyed. But just to get all the way to the end—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Are you ready?

PRINCETON: Huh?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: To convert or be destroyed?

PRINCETON: Okay, before I get to the end, I want to highlight Antek's sense that what's motivating all of this is fear. I think that it's worth discussing. That's something that is often thrown at religion, and I'm wondering if we wouldn't want to throw it other places, too. But the last thing is this, and it gets back to the Rancière. We talked about emancipation at the end, and it gets back to this question of Utopia, wrapping back around to the Fascists. From our perspective, I assume that this phenomenon that we've just been describing, it seems sort of dangerous. To me it seems dangerous because it promises a time where the ends will justify the means in a really radical way. Although, to their credit, it doesn't seem like the Tribulation, for these characters, is an excuse to go kill heathens, the way that you would kill... Orcs.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Or Jews.

PRINCETON: It doesn't seem to be what they're about. I was pleasantly surprised, or disappointedly surprised, to find that. So, when Rancière talks about emancipation, on page thirteen of that essay—

Pacemaker: Which essay?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: "The Emancipation of the Spectator." Or, "The Emancipated Spectator."

PRINCETON: He says that the blurring of the opposition between those who look and

those who act, those who are individuals and those who are members of a collective body, so that's emancipation, which he seems to be advocating. So, again, this blurring of the opposition between those who merely look classically, the spectator, the person who's at the theater watching the play, and those who act. Okay? So, this scholarship that I was reading, about this, it's not apologetic scholarship. These people are not Evangelicals trying to present a rosy picture. But it *does* seem as if you have, in this particular form of media, or art, a radical sense of moving from one who just looks, or one who buys, into being one who acts, one who takes responsibility. So, the question I was going to raise, and it takes us right back to where we started, is, though this I assume strikes us as being sort of frightening, is it possible that in the model—in this sort of model, in the use of art for political ends—is there something that potentially could be learned and adopted? Or, conversely, if we see in this series only the specter of fascism, then what allows us to absolve our own political ambitions of the same original sin, even if we are most assuredly less tacky than they are?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Well, that's a more interesting question.

PRINCETON: Which is exactly where we were before we went on this digression. Here I see this mass movement using *art*, principally, to achieve a political end, to change people's lives, in the everyday—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: "Art": that is, you mean, like, uh, pulp fiction?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You're talking about *Left Behind*?

PRINCETON: Yeah.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: That's not art.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Literature, whatever.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's a mass cultural—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's a form alien to the normal religious practices—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, let's just agree to call it something like art. Let's just agree to call it art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Let's call it media.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's a use of mass media, I mean, it might be sophisticated, but it's a certain means—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But, okay, Tolkien was a Christian, and blah blah blah, and he wrote his books, and hoped that they would sell, and injected his own Christian worldview... And that's art, right?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Injecting a

worldview into something is different from having an agenda for which you then write, drawing from this mass myth to make this propaganda, sci-fi pulp best-seller novel. It's different.

PRINCETON: What if nobody read it, could it be art then?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, if you would hope that in 500 years someone would dig it out and comment on it in an interesting way, it might potentially become an artifact of its time.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: That's an interesting question: would you think that Tim LaHaye and Jerry whatever-his-name-is are interested in this work surviving for the ages, their particular work? Is it a stepping-stone to Jesus, or for their own bank accounts?

PRINCETON: I think that they don't think the archive is going to be around for very long.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Do you think they're not completely cynical? They think they're doing good works?

PRINCETON: I study religion, so it's more interesting to me if I presuppose that people mean what they say. But, that's a faith claim.

There's no reason to actually believe it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When did those books actually start?

PRINCETON: They started in the mid- to late nineties.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Even like '95, or '96.

PRINCETON: They really spit them out.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When the whole new Christian economy seemed to get going.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You mean like Christian rap groups and Christian shoes and all that stuff?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, everything. That was in the nineties.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, it was all a big run-up to the Millennium. It was like, get them while you can.

PRINCETON: Back to Bettina. I don't know how you could defend the line that you're drawing. Or rather, let's say that... It sounds like, from what you said, that self-consciously political art cannot be art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don't think it's art because... It's applied craft. And applied craft, without reflecting the history of its genre, someone to recognize what this is doing, that this is now our contemporary form, understanding that this form has a history and trying to push it further, so hopefully it will be kept—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But they *are* pushing the form further. This is like, setting a record. This is amazing for the

idea of the novel, and blah blah blah.

Pacemaker: Is it written like a novel? It's like literature?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's written like a novel, but Seth, who tried to read it—and he reads quite a lot of books, really fast, I can witness—he didn't manage to read even half of it. It was so unreadable.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It was awful.

Pacemaker: Like, awful in what way?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I just couldn't... Did you ever try to read *The Celestine Prophecy*? Anybody?

PRINCETON: Yeah, I tried to read that.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Crazy, right?

PRINCETON: It's the same thing. How bad it is.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Like it's written by somebody on—

PRINCETON: But *The Da Vinci Code* is the same way.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, I was going to buy that.

PRINCETON: Really bad.

Pacemaker: Is it like bad writing, or just the story?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's almost interesting. *The Celestine Prophecy* really reads like the ramblings of a lunatic.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You were trying so hard to make it interesting for yourself, and to do something with it in your work, but you didn't—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I know, I tried *really* hard.

PRINCETON: I'm out of my league, obviously, but I don't understand why you don't end up with a definition of art that "art is that which I think is beautiful."

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What?

PRINCETON: I see that as the only justification of excluding—I mean, this might be a point we could agree on... I mean, we could agree to call it "media," and let it go.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Wow!

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Most culturally successful products will probably not create a historic line that will be kept. It's economic, it's popular, as many people as you can in as short of a time as possible to have—and it's also an economic interest.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They also don't think they have much time.

PRINCETON: Exactly.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There's not much time. So there are parameters totally different from that of a specific historical cultural discourse that you

refer to, which is also millennia old.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They must be postmillennialists.

PRINCETON: They're pre-

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Which means Jesus came already, or he's coming?

PRINCETON: Jesus is coming back in the beginning of the Millennium.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It sounds like they're trying to do a lot of good works.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: To me, it sounds like a kind of form of propaganda, and as long as the form doesn't reflect propaganda but *is* propaganda, there's no reason for it to become high art, really.

PRINCETON: Well, not "high" art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They're not interested in calling it art, probably, certainly not high art in the way that you're talking about.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don't think this is the interesting question of *Left Behind*, is it art or not. It's really not what it's about. But that would be my answer for why I would think it's not art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But it's interesting *for* art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, it's an interesting mass cultural product that uses the contemporary means of spreading of myths, for a certain means. But as long as nobody reflects on it, as a form or as a concept in its time, I wouldn't ever define it as art.

PRINCETON: So to use—this would be, then, a hard-line answer—which is to say—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm a hard-liner.

PRINCETON: —that to use media in this way, in this self-conscious political way, is *always* propaganda, and if *we* did it, it would be propaganda as well, even if we were doing it for the side of justice.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: The Whitney Biennial.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: If you want to argue what it means for the beginning or the end of the world, and the division of the people in good and bad, and going to heaven, and burning in hell, yes, I would say that would most likely be propaganda.

PRINCETON: What if we became Socialist Realists or something, and we wanted to produce art.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There is no God.

PRINCETON: So, if there is no God, then it can be art?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But why does it have to be thought of as art anyway?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don't know if this is an interesting question at this point.

PRINCETON: What's the interesting question?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: For the history of art now, which includes the political discourse and which position you take, interesting is how certain artists survived Stalin, and with which strategies, who was not purely complicit but who wanted to continue to live. It's different from people who were purely taking advantage of being some kind of craft person who knows how to use a brush... That's different.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Exactly. Space of art, space of communication, space of media. That still exists today, more or less, in a degraded way. You think right away: these *Left Behind* people are literally doing a political thing. Like, we take control of the radio station, which the Bolsheviks did also; we control this fortress here, or there, and control the communication coming out of it. That's generally a space of experimentation, in a sense.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Resistance to dominant structures, most often. It's very hard to imagine to go with something like that...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's permissive. That's the paradox. Art is... like... oh, fucking hell...

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Art is the permissive paradoxical structure of transgression that then gets absorbed.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Although, this is stupid to play devil's advocate, but I would say that Tim and Jerry probably think that they *are* resisting the dominant structure.

PRINCETON: They are, to a certain extent.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, but they're resisting in a much different way. They're resisting in kind of a direct political way of taking control of power.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Charlie Chaplin would be a more interesting example than Tom and Jerry.

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Ben and Jerry.

(laughter)

PRINCETON: Separate the question of the mass versus not mass. If it seems like part

of a utopian project, even on a small scale, to emancipate the spectator, to have the consumption of media not merely be a passive action but to have it be constitutive of a way of being in the world in an active way that is in pursuit of some virtue, whether it be aesthetic, ethical, or social, or whatever. It wasn't important to me that they were doing art, but it seems like they're doing *that*. And I heard from Antek before we started that, a hunger for that—well, I didn't hear an endorsement of that specific activity, but I would have thought that you would have, and many of us would, have signed on to the use of art for precisely that purpose, to wake people up, for example.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: If we talk about spaces of ritual, liminal space, like the adolescent graduating from the tribe, et cetera, they enter into a space where suddenly you experience, no matter what class you come from, you're all equal, you experience something else, and that's a kind of like reorganization into a new social sphere, like you're in a new place in society. Victor Turner, I guess he was a sociologist or whatever, like, an Englishman in the sixties, he tried to make terms with American pop culture and would say art was always this kind of space that was bound to be recuperated. Of course! That was its function. But maybe at certain points, it could grow larger, in a way, it could really reevaluate things, in a sense... (long pause)... I lost my track...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: But with the Rancière, you shouldn't forget whom he's talking to with this essay. He wrote this for a summer academy of theater students. He's not writing to the producers of a Hollywood play.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But it's also knowing that any space you create in art, of course it'll be taken over, because that's its purpose. But then it can get rampant. That is also the space of change. That was like the funny thing that Turner would say. He'd say it's predictable, it's like holidays, festivals, inversion festivals, Carnival in Kreuzberg in Berlin on May 1st, et cetera, but then there could be a space that actually affects things and actually changes things in a certain way. But *those* people, I don't think they're thinking about that. They're hard-core political. They're not thinking about aesthetics... There's no notion of experimentation with them...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT, returning to

room, laughs.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: What?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, sorry, I just came back into the conversation.... It's great to think about the idea of experimentation as a criterion for *anybody*, for any population of the American culture at large, of any religion. But I think it does exist.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It does exist. Of course. That's also kind of the back story, because as much as we want to... You talk about my fascist tendencies or inherent fascist.... But our reaction is always to say "eliminate every fucking backwater Christian, because they're all fucked up."

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It seems to be that parts of American culture, religious people, feel alienated from capitalist culture. As it is more broadly experienced by the rest of us. They feel like they're capitalists, and they want to be consumers and participate in America, and yet they feel alienated from the products. To me, it seems like the whole Christian economy is trying to assert the same kind of rights or sets of freedoms economically, yet producing products that—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They're the same, but they have a cross on them, or whatever.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Right.

PRINCETON: I assume that you knew about this stuff, the fear of the One World Government. Right? But there's also the fear of the consolidation of media. They want more local control. I hear that anxiety.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, all those churches, too—I won't generalize it, but where I'm from, all of these Christian churches, they're all incredibly locally run. There is no—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There's no Clear Channel.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: They're really based on different personalities. Like, where I live, within the two or three towns in that area, there are probably sixty, seventy Baptist churches, Church of Christ, Church of God, and they're all— maybe some are twenty people, some are ten people, some are a hundred people, and it all revolves around particular personalities. They all interpret things differently. Clearly, in religion, a lot of Christian religion, I don't want to speak

for other religions, but there seems to be—that sense of freedom comes out of there being a structure, and as long as there is a larger structure that you can somewhat depend on, then you have freedom within it. You even have that within art. There's always this idea of structure being liberating, or structure allowing freedom.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: When you mentioned that, I had this weird thought that that's the kind of test case of the entire religious idea.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Which is like the most fucking bullshit idea that ever happened.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, no, no—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Okay, "structure makes me free..."

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Let's say you're within an impossible life—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No, the structure does *not* make me free. Because even if I'm without structure, because I've always existed with no structure... The question of unemployment, the question of going to criminality, being outside of structure, before you end up in prison, it's a question of structure all the same—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Right, of course. Not that religion wasn't meant for prison, religion was invented to take a structure that has a certain dimension and make you feel like—

Bernadette Corporation: Yeah, and with the fucking system of prison, if prison makes you suddenly come back and embrace structure, well okay, that sucks!

The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: For me, my experience of rioting is that it's not about a larger cause, it's really about a simple thing of, like, breaking the law. It's just about breaking the law.

PRINCETON: And that's about pleasure? Rather than about repairing—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Pleasure, and also transgressing the law, and just, like, okay, can I face the police now? Or do I run home and stay under the bed, like I should do? You understand? Because when they show up with their fucking military uniforms, et cetera... And probably, like, the only valuable thing of France—the March, April thing—was to see the courageousness of sixteen-year-

old kids, seventeen-year-old kids. Where do they come from? They're like fighting the police under these conditions today, these post-9/11, super-locked-down conditions, and there's 3,000 people in jail right now from those riots. Where does that come from? I'm not saying that it's pleasure; I'm saying it's a serious line that you cross. It's not about crossing over to an idea, because crossing over to an idea can be as simple as voting, for God's sake.

PRINCETON: Where do you think it comes from?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: What? The desire to break the law?

PRINCETON: So it comes from desire.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: What, those sixteen-year-olds?

PRINCETON: Yeah, what enables them to do that? Regardless of whether we think that it's a good thing or a bad thing.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Obviously in France what enables them to do that was the kind of patheticness of a few years ago when the right wing almost got voted into government, and they had to vote for this guy Jacques Chirac going into the government, and the humiliation of that.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, but these sixteen-year-olds were not humiliated by Jacques Chirac coming in.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Some of them are! I've been reading some tracts where there is a certain kind of social consciousness here, still existing in this country, which people are saying that we should go further...

PRINCETON: I'm sure there may be many motivations, but if I had to reduce it down to one thing, it wouldn't be that.

Pacemaker: What would it be?

PRINCETON: It would be something more like the desire to get laid. Or something like that.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No.

PRINCETON: Which is to say—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You mean, "akin to"? Or...

PRINCETON: Akin to. Just picturing that... I mean, I think the human animal *imitates*.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, but the culture of getting laid... In the sixties there was already this kind of shock, of rock music, et cetera, which already was affecting youth culture for a good fucking fifteen years, before anything happened. The culture of getting laid? Today? It's clear: if you want to get laid, you

can do it. It's totally possible. You don't have to protest politically to do it.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I thought you said it wasn't possible in Berlin, though.

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: To get laid?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, weren't you saying that?

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Whatever.... I'm just saying, like...

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No, man... Forget about... social possibilities in Berlin, et cetera... (laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I'm saying, in a youth culture/sixties thing, when you have a general culture, which was more or less unified... You have to understand, bourgeois kids and proletarian kids were hearing the Rolling Stones at the same time. They were affected by rock and roll. A phenomenon like the mods, or whatever, was happening across the board. It was a time of a certain kind of cultural exuberance, if you will, on a capitalistic level. But these days everything is fucking *set*. I don't care where you are.

You know how to find your libidinal satisfactions. From whatever class you come from. From whatever orientation you come from, sexually. It's very strict, it's very clear.

PRINCETON: But I think for you... I might be presupposing too much, but I thought initially the stake—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: These are the worst Dunhills I ever smoked.

PRINCETON: —that the stake was how to interrupt this hideous injustice. It sounds like the argument you're making now is more about how to have more fun than we're currently having, which—there's nothing wrong with fun, but is it about... having a better time?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: They're a bit connected, I think. The things that prevent us from having a good time are exactly the same things that cause this fucking horror on this Earth, in a sense. The fact that we can drug ourselves, immunize ourselves by certain bypasses or whatever, into believing we have a certain life, is the most tragic thing I could imagine. Actually, I would never make a separation between the two. If I could have

a good time, and rectify these things, that would be the best thing possible. Yeah! (Pause) Is that an answer? These cigarettes suck... The new Dunhills are bullshit... Yeah! The division between the two... **Pacemaker: Do you want coffee?** **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I myself particularly... Number one: international, trendy, degraded, aging whatever—you know, I could do that in the first degree, fake to have a life, and at the same time... You talk about questions of social justice, of consciousness, of a certain abstract question of solidarity. Why don't you say the word "solidarity"? Because solidarity is such an old lefty term, which is also kind of bankrupt. Isn't America trying to make democracy in the Middle East "solidarity"? That kind of bullshit. It's a very abstract notion. The conversation continues haphazardly for several minutes...** **PRINCETON:** So, this kind of transcendence that you imagine, which seems to drive you, right? **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Absolutely.** **PRINCETON:** Would that be about *moments* of transcendence, or is it about building the conditions for permanent transcendence? I tend to think like Bettina, that there's no outside. You climb out of one illusion, you're climbing into another one. **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Yeah, okay, fine, but what are the qualities, from one illusion to another, exactly? For me it's as simple as that. It's exactly like passing through that experience, of going from one illusion to another... You don't think about the outside.... (long pause) As I said, "passing from one illusion to another!"** **PRINCETON:** So, is it the iconoclastic moment? Is that the shift? The moment where you destroy the previous thing and build a new one? **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's more the satisfaction of experiencing the destruction of the previous thing. It's really like... That's the funny thing. At that moment, throwing a brick, a Molotov cocktail at somebody—** **CONTINUOUS PROJECT: At somebody?** **BERNADETTE CORPORATION: At the police.** **CONTINUOUS PROJECT:** This whole conversation, when you've been mentioning that moment of throwing that brick, or whatever, I'm totally in agreement that there is something

that has to be salvaged or talked about from that moment, but it often gets clouded over or lost in the discussion because it immediately falls back into discussing the material realities of that social situation where you're throwing a brick in the riot. But in fact that muddies the waters, because we're really talking about something else that exists at the same time. So it's not good, it's not bad, it's just there is something else that we're talking about.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I don't want to isolate it, like some kind of libidinal—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No, I don't want to isolate it. I want to say that there's—you keep on adding. There's *another* thing we're talking about, and it's not against the other thing. There's a lot of things going on.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's also beautiful when that act is supported. When others say, oh yeah, that's necessary, actually. That displays our articulation of force in relation to power.

PRINCETON: But as a principle—let's propose it and see if people agree that these sorts of moments—that, one: for what you just described, you need both an ideal and your comrades, to have these moments.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Remember, you need a myth, otherwise you can't convince your comrades.

PRINCETON: But let's not take it apart.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: There's also one part in addition to that, that's purely individualistic, maybe narcissistic, I don't know—

PRINCETON: But I'm with you, in trying to say, "Let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater," let's try to figure out what it is—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I just don't want to say, "Well, that's a slippery slope to Nazism."

PRINCETON: Exactly, I agree with you, but I think there is something that's worth identifying, so let's build it from the ground up. I was promoting that as a principle. It doesn't have to be that principle. At the very least, you said you wanted it to be more than this libidinal charge.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yeah, of course.

PRINCETON: But at the very least, it is *that*, right?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It might be that. It might be a thing and its opposite.

PRINCETON: So, it's a libidinal charge. It's *affective*. We're talking about a feeling.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: But also how you continue with that

feeling afterward, and how so many other pressures and forces come down to extinguish that feeling, like the unions, the political parties, et cetera. I'm establishing a very traditional anarchist pose.

PRINCETON: But it has to lead to something.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: No,

because at that moment it's

not about... It's precisely about

discharging from the idea that it's

going to lead to anything. Because

if you start thinking that it's going to

lead to something, you're like, "This

is going to get me in trouble," or "This

is going to make me look cool." It's

about getting beyond that.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Like Japanese performance art, or the

Living Theater: you go out and have

an orgy with them on stage, and go

home and be your normal—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, but

maybe there's something that can

be redeemed from those moments,

from that history?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: No, I'm

not saying about the history, I'm

just saying that they themselves

recognized a certain problem, like

Chris and Cosey and Genesis, when

they're doing Coum Transmissions

they said, "We were cutting

ourselves up, and people come there

like it's their fucking holiday, and

dismiss it," in a sense. You want the

experience to last, you want it to go

on. That immediate experience and

that immediate libidinal discharge.

You want it to last. You want this

interruption of daily life to last.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I'm not sure.

I think it's actually maybe premised on

the opposite. It has to be just a brief

moment.

PRINCETON: Have you ever experienced

anything like this, what you're describing?

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

Maybe... I don't know. Not really.

I was very resistant to it, actually,

because I have so many repressions

in general.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I remember

throwing a brick through a window in

my high school. I still remember that.

It was like, "Let's literalize it." We got

drunk, ran up to the science building,

threw a brick through the window,

and ran away.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

That's not the same thing. When

I'm drunk, I've done so many stupid

things. I'm amazed I'm not arrested

for it yet. It's not the same thing as

facing the people, facing the police.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: In that moment I was facing the police. In my mind.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Not in your mind, in your *paranoiac* mind.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Well, it's the same thing.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's not the same thing as seeing a line of them with their armored trucks and their shields, in front of you.

PRINCETON: And you're on the side of good, and there's only a few of you, and everyone else is on the side of evil.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's more like they're on the side of extinguishment of anything... Is it so hard to hate cops?

(laughter)

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I don't hate cops.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: I do.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: It's the natural state to hate cops.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: I certainly

have an instinctive—I see a police a

car coming, and I feel like—

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: Like they're such assholes!

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Yes, but I

wouldn't say, "I hate cops." Who was

it—was I talking to somebody in this

room recently?—who said: "I hate,"

and I stopped them... Who was it?

Somebody recently, in the last couple

of days, said, "I hate," and I stopped:

God! That's so rare to say you actually

hate.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: God!

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION:

Please, God... I hate the fucking

police. It's very simple, the police, all

you have to deal with—

(laughter)

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: It's

very simple—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: Can we

stop this? Who's going to transcribe

the whole thing?

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: The intern.

The Continuous Project intern.

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: The unpaid

intern.

BERNADETTE CORPORATION: All

you have to deal with—

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: You don't

hate the police. I know you don't.

CLAIRE FONTAINE: Of course we hate the

police!

(laughter)

CONTINUOUS PROJECT: That's the

first thing you've said all evening!

