

# Essential Politics

Travis Fristoe

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*Days of War Nights of Love:*  
*Crimethink for Beginners*

Less a novel than an exploded manifesto, *Days of War, Nights of Love* might be just what we need. It certainly *might* be just what we need. It certainly saved my night when I picked it up. I was expecting an evening of frenzied screamo music at the show (which I got plus some nice dialogue), but the merchandise table housed the real incendiary items.

*Days of War* is the type of book you'd thumb through in the store and actually decide to buy (or steal). Avoiding what lapsed grad student Phil refers to as "the thin gruel of narrative," the book instead gleefully mashes appropriated art pieces with personal testimony. Reconfigured Frank Miller comic panels shout "Face it, your politics are boring as fuck!" Whether you agree or not, there's a refreshing quality to a book that offers the same amount of information to both the serious reader and casual browser, because despite steady sales of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* and *Nation of Ulysses* CDs, most of us are still living lives that are frustratingly incomplete.

The past four centuries are all fodder for this new manifesto — everything from the Unabomber to the Smiths, Henry Miller to the German J2M movement, Kalahari bushmen to *Natural Born Killers* — finds its way onto the pages. Such voracious stealing from history and applying as needed becomes not just a practice, but a saving grace. By never labeling themselves punks or new Dadaists and instead stealing all manner of praxis and pranks, CrimethInc remains elusive, avoiding the pitfalls that toppled previous revolutionaries. Beloved nihilistic comic characters Milk & Cheese re-emerge as Soy Milk & Tofu to offer shoplifting as the true antidote to capitalism. The book is simultaneously tongue-in-cheek and as serious as getting up in the morning for work, yet avoids the inherent alienation of most historical and cultural texts (whose authors they dismiss as "careerist historicizers").

Topics range from anarchy to hierarchy, work to sex. alienation to liberation and technology, but every page bums with a passion for a freer life. Lies, exaggerations and blatant plagiarisms mix freely with passionate arguments. Nadia admits on p. 171 that this may all "sound like anarcho-mystical academic nonsense (which it *is* of course — freedom cannot be understood except through mysticism!)." but the Crimethinc workers do weave a good spell. Who disputes obvious but unvoiced concerns like, "We pay rent before we live there a month. But we get paid 1-4 weeks after doing the work." Other essays walk a precarious line between arrogant and inspiring: activists are taken to task for being dull and guilty; radicals and artists as excrement peddlers, forever squirreling moments away for their next product. Too harsh? Or a necessary critique?

The book's vehement insistence that living is more important than art carries the argument beyond typical debate. If you make it to the end, the personal testimonials about not working and closing art pieces become an aria of voices urging you to close the book and live. Glorious, even for the most cynical reader. What more can we ask from books? Whether or not you buy it probably depends on what you think of that last Refused LP- revolutionary cannibals or well-dressed poseurs? Well-read former straight-edge kids or new messiahs?" Don't think too hard about it — the book warns from page one, "This book will not save your life; that, my friend, is up to you." — Travis Fristoe.

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***Evasion: Travel Crime***

Those needing a more literal corollary of the Crimethinc lifestyle should pick up *Evasion* zine, one man's travelogue of thievery and trespassing across these United States. What if straight-edge took a radically political turn-rejecting not just the leisure drugs of smoking, drinking & sex. but other core American values like working and consumerism? An evolutionary possibility as explosive as the Planet of the Apes! *Evasion's* first-person testimonial illustrates just such an evolution as he shoplifts, hops trains and hitchhikes across America. The journey provides a literal and metaphorical sei2aire of our life and country. The very first page explains that his is "a path not to be mistaken for 'poverty is punk' posturing, it's about taking back your life." Sure, go to corporate health food stores and get the precious vegan snacks, but "*left-hand*" all but the cheapest bagel. His targets (Barnes & Noble, hotel pools, movie theaters, closed libraries) are all worthy and familiar ones. Imagine further a world where

the proclamations from 80s hardcore were rallying cries instead of ironic witticisms at the local pub. The obvious reference would be *SCAM* zine, which the *Evasion* editor lovingly refers to twice, but *Evasion* is solely a solipsistic exercise. You won't find the interviews and community activism that make *SCAM* the mythic tome it is, but *Evasion* still beautifully delivers the exhilaration of a good scam. — Travis Fristoe.

*\$2 post paid from Crimethinc. HQ / 2695 Rangewood Dr / Atlanta. GA 30345 [www.crimethinc.com](http://www.crimethinc.com)*

*\$2 SCAM c/o NO! Records / PO Box 14008 / Berkeley, CA 94712*

The Library of Unconventional Lives

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