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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**A Philosophy of Rebellion:
Anarchism in Literature and Film**

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of
English and Comparative Literature
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

Menna El Dawi Zein

Under the supervision of
Dr. William Melaney

May 2016

The American University in Cairo

**A Philosophy of Rebellion:
Anarchism in Literature and Film**

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The degree of Master of Arts

Has been approved by

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Date

DEDICATION

To a teacher whose students learned how to think not what to think!

To a parent whose children learned self love but not self obsession!

To a country whose leaders learned humanity before politics!

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to outline the philosophy and purpose of anarchism through an interdisciplinary approach that involves literature and film. The main argument is that anarchism, apart from the moral connotations that have accrued to the term, maintains the idea of the inherent natural balance or equilibrium among cosmic powers. This idea grounds the theory of anarchism in the political sphere and helps us understand how anarchism can be applied to the sphere of culture. By considering both theory and practice in the anarchist tradition, the thesis proposes to redefine anarchism through an interdisciplinary approach that examines the philosophical history of anarchism from Plato to Kristeva and also discusses Youssef Ziedan's novel, *Azazeel*, and Charles Chaplin's film, *The Great Dictator*, as anarchist works. In the latter context, *Azazeel* is shown to provide an alternative history of ancient Alexandria, while *The Great Dictator* offers a modern illustration of anarchism as a practical, humanist ideology.

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Introduction:

The Dichotomy of Oppression and Power

To understand the philosophy behind anarchism, one must dissect the reasons for its emergence, the factors that resulted in its establishment. The link between oppression and power holds the key to the emergence of anarchism as a revolutionary doctrine. By relating political behavior to the sudden display of violent feelings, one sees that oppression can perform a basic role in shaping the anarchist mentality. Still, an act of oppression has two aspects: the oppressed and the oppressor. If the first is relatively powerless, the latter is certainly powerful. With both sides of the political relationship in place, the situation is now set for the outcome. That is to say: power plus oppression can result in rebellion, an anarchist act of re-defining power.

In defining oppression in a political context, one might refer to the attempt to confront a pattern of oppressive ideologies nurtured by dictatorships in pursuit of absolute dominance. The Roman emperors in antiquity kept their subjects hungry to the point that they were thrown into turmoil by a slight increase in the price of bread. Medieval kings and queens also produced oppressive ideologies that placed their people in physical and intellectual shackles. During the Enlightenment, various biases, prejudices, and preconceived ideas became the target of intellectual critique, which identified oppression with the dead weight of the past. In the wake of late modernity, oppression was countered by resistance as the world was plagued with totalitarian systems in which oppression not only engulfed the poor, the women and the colonized, but also everyone who opposed the ruling ideology.

Power, on the other hand, is an essential ingredient in the political mix. If oppression is only a means to an end, then the end certainly is power. In order to gain power, the political agent not only needs to oppress others but also to eliminate any form of opposition that would pose a threat to stability. In other words, the powerful often seek to eliminate the contrasting force that attempts to challenge its strategies by encouraging people to grasp abstract notions like freedom and hope. This counter-force threatens to invade the oppressor's world and to strip the oppressor from a position of a god-like authority. Augusto Boal has discussed this process in *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*:

This invasion is a symbolic transgression. It is symbolic of all the transgressions that we have to enact in order to liberate ourselves from our oppressions. Without transgression (which doesn't necessarily have to be violent!), without transgression of customs, of the oppressive situation, of the limits imposed, or the very law that must be transformed—without transgression there is no liberation. To liberate oneself is to transgress, to transform. It is to create the new, that which did not exist and which comes to exist. *To liberate oneself is to transgress. To transgress is to be. To liberate oneself is to be.* (Boal 74)

The message Boal is trying to convey here is that without an act of rebellion the oppressed will remain confined within the laws, customs, and limits drawn by the powerful oppressor. Hence, the path to liberation for an anarchist is to rebel against power.

The binaries being considered are mainly about the constituents of power--right versus wrong, good versus evil, God versus the Devil and so on. It seems that one can

secure power only if one can position oneself on the positive side of an opposition. This practical insight gives birth to the cynical maxim: “Whoever has the gold makes the rules” (Parker and Hart 1). Thus, whoever is in a position of power dictates the norms of good and evil. Power therefore walks hand in hand with oppression, which allows power to be stabilized. The more oppression someone imposes, the more powerful he becomes.

In attempting to reverse this arrangement, the rebel seeks to overthrow power, to break the norm and liberate the oppressed from all imposed ideologies. Rebellion is the anarchist tool allowing for regression to the mean where power can be defined as a variable force that moves from one position to another before achieving equilibrium. Major anarchist writers such as Kropotkin, Tolstoy, and Bakunin generally agree that anarchism is a “critique of human society as it exists and a vision of a better form of social order” (Shatz xii). In other words, anarchism challenges the status quo and replaces it with another and better constellation of power. Whether the word “better” here truly describes this new form of social order is perhaps debatable. A key to understanding this challenge is the anarchist resistance to imposed political hierarchies.

My thesis will present the theory of anarchism, particularly as a critique of organized religion, and the emergence of political anarchism as exemplified in a specific twentieth-century film. While the distinction between these two forms of anarchism is fluid, I believe that the difference can be maintained for the purposes of my exposition. In the first chapter, the theory of anarchism is developed in terms of a critical reading of late Roman history. The fictional recreation of this period in Youssef Ziedan’s novel, *Azazeel*, will clarify the anarchist’s perspective on institutions. In the second chapter, Charles Chaplin’s film *The Great Dictator*, is shown to articulate anarchist politics in an artistic

medium. These two chapters examine anarchism from different perspectives, but, in my belief, are complementary.

In his highly controversial novel, *Azazeel*, Youssef Ziedan tells the story of a society in which a shift in power occurred in the movement from paganism to Christianity, thus bringing about a brief period of anarchism. In this narrative, this rising power (Christianity) appears to have been consolidated after invoking a state of rebellion against the old gods in order to replace them with the new God. Throughout the novel, we are given evidence of how these displacements could take place: “I am sure the monastery building was a temple in former times. In fact it was a magnificent temple. This is what the scattered stones suggest [. . .] the ruins of temples have a special aura which an Egyptian like me cannot mistake” (Ziedan 222-23). Ziedan’s protagonist, Hypa, keeps referring to the changes that came about when this once anarchist religion flooded the earth after the Persecution Era during the second century. To further elaborate on the importance of this particular episode, we might recall Shatz’s view that “even the most revolution-minded anarchist regarded anarchy only as a stepping-stone to anarchism, a transitional phase in which the old would be destroyed so that the new might emerge” (Shatz xii).

The old here would be paganism, whereas the new is Christianity. The anarchist/transitional phase was the Persecution Era that deposed paganism and replaced it with the new order to re-establish the balance. By regarding anarchism as a “transitional phase” between the old and the new, Shatz presents a broadly phenomenological interpretation of it. This notion was thoroughly articulated by the anarchist pioneer, Kropotkin, in *Modern Science and Anarchism*, which examines society as in a state of “continual

evolution” and as passing through constant change. Kropotkin outlined that “[t]he idea of a continuous development (evolution) and of a continual adaptation to a changing environment [. . .] was applied to the study of all nature, as well as to men and their social institutions. . . .” (*Modern Science and Anarchism* 36). This notion of a “continual evolution” is referred to in *Azazel*, where instead of pagan temples we see Christian churches, and instead of sculptures of the old gods we see the Cross. Less than a century after Kropotkin, George Woodcock presented a similar conception of anarchism as “striving to adjust the social balance in its natural direction” (Woodcock 20).

Both Kropotkin and Tolstoy help us further define anarchism as a political position that opposes the values of the “herd” while challenging immoral forms of rule. Kropotkin explains that in anarchism, “the moral conception changes entirely. A man perceives that what he had considered moral is the deepest immorality. In some instances it is a custom, a venerated tradition, that is fundamentally immoral [. . .] we find a moral system framed in the interests of a single class [. . .] It becomes a duty to act ‘immorally’.” Hence, the anarchist only accepts outward power when power remains within the bounds of morality. People should reject laws that “mutilate them by religion, law, or government” (Kropotkin *Revolutionary Pamphlets* 112-13). Tolstoy’s work, “On Anarchy”, echoes Kropotkin’s view of anarchism: “Will you, a rational and good being [. . .] take part in the murder of erring men of a different race, will you participate in the extermination of whole nations of so-called savages [. . .] will you participate in all these actions or even be in agreement with those who permit them, or will you not?” (Tolstoy 3). For an anarchist can never accept authority uncritically or adopt the authority’s method of rule in order to achieve legitimacy. To Tolstoy, anarchism allows for war

against oppressive ideologies. Nonetheless, the battle should remain between ideologies and never turn into a blood bath. A person ceases to be an anarchist as soon as s/he joins the government or engages in its practices, if only to spread anti-oppressive views.

Chaplin's speech in *The Great Dictator* evokes a paradigm for understanding Kropotkin's and Tolstoy's views on anarchism. The opening lines of the speech are revealing: "I'm sorry, but I don't want to be an emperor. That's not my business. I don't want to rule or conquer anyone." These statements sum up the anarchist notion of renouncing power in favor of returning to a belief in the general goodness of man: "We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness—not by each other's misery . . . " What Chaplin's words are essentially indicating in this speech is that, like Tolstoy and Kropotkin, he [an anarchist] does not wish to take part in an oppressive government, even though he might have a moral strategy for redeeming the system. It appears that the speaker appreciates his role as a citizen versus wielding a scepter of power that will corrupt his soul.

Looking more closely at the speech, the border between reality and fiction is blurred so that the audience can no longer tell who is offering the speech—either Chaplin or the barber/protagonist of *the Great Dictator*. This doubleness opens up the possibility that Chaplin is directly expressing his own views. This sudden turn of events suggests Chaplin's meta-narrative, which allows the satiric portrayal of Adolf Hitler to provide insight into any dictator. Moreover, in diminishing the moral credibility of the dictators, Chaplin seeks to strip them of their power and reveal to the people that "these unnatural men [are] machine men with machine minds and machine hearts!" Chaplin's strategy parallels the spiritual core of Tolstoy's Christian anarchism. Chaplin contended: "In the

seventeenth Chapter of St Luke it is written: ‘The Kingdom of God is within man’—not one man nor a group of men, but in all men!” For Chaplin, morality contains a natural balance: “In this world there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone” – From the ending speech in Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator*.

In his attitude toward religion, the anarchist does not attack faith or the Church but to criticize an attitude of subservience. In a similar way, the anarchist’s attitude toward the public sphere is not to attack politics but to counter the will to obey the State unconditionally. In a talk on “Anarchism and Religion” that was given in the South Place Ethical Society in July 1991, Nicolas Walter expressed the view that—just as the Church once seemed necessary to human existence but is now withering away—the State will in time wither away as well. In short, anarchism does not seek to demolish a powerful entity, whether it be God, religion, a ruler, or a regime, but rather targets the absolutism of power and attempts to restore a natural balance in which no entity that has its home in the human world is all-powerful. Thus, the core of anarchism is the imperative assertion, “No gods, no masters.”

Chapter I:

The Dissident Philosopher and the Anarchist Soul

Although the concept of anarchism might still be a controversial notion, the basics of any definition form a system of thought that seeks to redefine power. The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the purpose of anarchism and the philosophy of anarchism in terms of Youssef Ziedan's novel, *Azazeel*. In this chapter, I will discuss the issue of whether or not this text harbors anarchist ideologies and also how Christianity, as a potentially anarchist religion, opposed the paganism of antiquity. My discussion will employ Youssef Ziedan's novel as a literary tool for exploring anarchism as a conceptual and political system.

The Anarchist Writer: Questioning the Nature of God and the Devil

In "A New Type of Intellectual Dissident," Julia Kristeva discusses three types of Dissident: "First, there is the rebel who attacks political power Secondly, there is the psychoanalyst, who transforms the dialectic of law-and-desire into a contest between *death and discourse*. His archetypal rival from whom he tries to distance himself is religion. . . . Thirdly, there is the writer who experiments with limits of identity, producing texts where the law does not exist outside language . . ." (Kristeva 295). According to Kristeva, the dissident writer is one who demolishes the borders of single identity and uses language to give a new meaning to the laws of the text. By applying Kristeva's conception of a dissident writer to Ziedan's narrative technique in *Azazeel*, we can find traces of literary anarchism in the text that could contribute to our understanding of the term.

A short summary of *Azazeel* is in order. The narrative follows the life of Hypa, a Christian monk who lived during the early era of Christian rule in ancient Alexandria. Despite his religious upbringing, Hypa is often skeptical about the essence of Christianity. His inner demon, Azazeel, keeps surfacing in his imagination, confusing his faith with existential questions regarding the nature of God, Truth and the Dionysian temptations of love and lust. In the end, Hypa seeks a new life of freedom as an alternative to the hypocrisy and tyranny of the church of Alexandria. The novel deals with various religion topics, but *Azazeel* is not so much an exposition of anarchism from a religious point of view as a critical history of institutional religion. The author is not to be confused with various characters, particularly Hypa, who lived before Islam and therefore cannot be identified with an Islamic rendering of the Christian message.

Ziedan consciously fuses his protagonist/narrator Hypa with Azazeel, making it almost impossible for the reader to separate them or even to think of them independently. At the beginning of the novel, the reader perceives the accounts of Azazeel as tricks of the unconscious or perhaps as a manifestation of Hypa's mind. Yet, towards the end of scroll twenty-eight, the reader can no longer tell whether the devil assumes a monk's form to manipulate the mind of someone who lacks faith, or instead to express schizophrenic delusions merely because he is skeptical of his own religion. The enunciation of Truth comes as quite a shock to the reader when Azazeel confronts the monk: "I am you, Hypa" (292). An echo of Bakunin swiftly comes to mind as the ultimate rebel identifies himself with the monk: "[O]ur first ancestors, our Adams and our Eves, were, if not gorillas, very near relatives of gorillas, omnivorous, intelligent and

ferocious beasts, endowed in a higher degree than the animals of another species with two precious faculties—*the power to think* and *the desire to rebel*” (Bakunin 6).

In a single indicative sentence, Ziedan deconstructs the notion of Evil and plants the devil into the very soul of a Christian monk. And what is even more astonishing is that throughout his novel, Ziedan never fails to re-construct the devil as an incredibly sophisticated presence, a being who does not side with Good or Evil. The devil in Ziedan’s *Azazeel* only aspires to the Truth. Such neutrality, rather than expressing any proclivity to side with the Devil, places Azazeel right in the core of anarchist philosophy that achieves its rudimentary expression in Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” and reemerges in Kristeva’s contemporary essay, “A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident.” Anarchism is not primarily based on the opposition between Good and Evil as a fundamental principle for understanding the world. Its main concern is regression to the mean and in maintaining a balance between both powers. At the same time, in anarchism, Good and Evil continue in an eternal conflict and the human world must contend with their unending opposition.

In an elaborate and quite explicit mode of converse, Azazeel admits to Hypa the primary end of his very existence in scroll twenty-eight:

I asked Azazeel what was the common meaning of his many names and he said: ‘The Antithesis’. Azazeel is the antithesis of the deified God I was fascinated by the concept. So he is the antithesis of the God we know and whom we have defined as absolute good, and because everything has its opposite we have assigned as absolute evil an entity that is the antithesis of the one we had initially postulated. We have called it Azazeel

and many other names. I whispered to him, ‘But Azazeel, you are the cause of evil in the world.’ ‘Hypa, be sensible. I’m the one who justifies evil. So evil causes me. . . . I am the will, the willer, and the willed. I am the servant of mankind, the one who incites believers to pursue the threads of their fancies.’ (292)

By defining himself in sophisticated terms and placing himself in the center of authority, oppression and abstraction, Azazeel almost constitutes a definition of God. God and Azazeel are both Truths in an eternal struggle for domination. Azazeel is not merely the first anarchist but rather the ultimate anarchist, created by another anarchist (God) to define himself and his mode of power. If the mode of power is no longer of interest to either, then both God and the devil will simply observe one another from afar without interference. The final episode of Hypatia’s assassination argues in favor of this theory: “Her wails of pain had reached the vaults of heaven, where God and his angels and Satan watched what was happening and did nothing” (129). Thus, the text recognizes neither God nor Azazeel as Absolute Good or Evil. Ziedan deprives both sides of their representations of absolutism, assigning them a common passive ground.

Ziedan’s characterization of Hypa could be categorized as anarchist in itself. For Hypa is a Christian monk whose life companion and soul mate is actually Azazeel, the devil. Thus, he is a character who contains the two extremities of Good and Evil. And by extension, Hypa’s life reflects the same contradiction of forces. He devotes his life to Christian Sufism, and at the same time, he indulges in Dionysian desires and lustful episodes. Such possibilities were disturbing but offered him an intimate kind of guidance:

From inside came a whisper, pressing me to put my hand on her thigh and lose myself with her erotic passion, then keep her by my side for the rest of my life. It was the same whispering voice that I came to know several weeks later. It was the voice of Azazeel, alluring me with a call from deep within me: 'Don't lose Martha the way you lost Octavia twenty years ago.' That was not my voice, Hypa. That was the call of your own soul.'

(278)

The rejection of conventional characters is a trademark in modernist writing, yet Ziedan carries this rejection to a whole other level when he not only breaks classical rules of character formation but also shows the anarchy within the protagonist's inner and private thoughts. In doing so, Ziedan's Hypa mirrors the human psyche where the outer form is ideal but the inner soul is chaotic. Hypa's thoughts throughout the novel transcend ordinary internal conflicts. Instead, they pose existential dilemmas, theological controversies, and questions of authorial legitimacy. Hypa's consciousness truly presents us with the image of a man who has "the power to think and the desire to rebel."

To elaborate this point further, we need to take a deeper look at the text of Azazeel, especially where it concerns the identity of God:

I learned that this Sicilian master of hers did not believe in any particular religion, but in the truth of all religions and all gods, as long as they help refine mankind. She put her head on my shoulder and whispered that her master always asserted that God appears to man in a different form in different times and places, and that this is the nature of divinity. (71)

This utterance offers us the most compelling conclusion to the whole novel. What Ziedan so audaciously attempts to say is that God is anarchist! If ‘God appears to man in a different form in different times and places’, then he defies the established concept of divine order and negates the absolute authority of whatever religion is dominant in time. He then re-appears in a new form to deconstruct the now old form of Himself. This means that “in every age man creates a god to his liking and his god is always his visions, his impossible dreams, and his wishes” (290). This sophisticated theory could be deemed logical, considering how everything on earth that has a tendency to repeat itself, maintain balance, and return to the mean. In this case, Kropotkin’s vision of anarchism, as expressed in his *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, might be related to cosmic principles:

The whole aspect of the universe changes with this new conception. The idea of force governing the world, of pre-established law, preconceived harmony, disappears to make room for the harmony that Fourier had caught a glimpse of: the one which results from the disorderly and incoherent movements of numberless hosts of matter, each of which goes its own way and all of which hold each other in equilibrium. (117-18)

This suggests that the creator of a variable universe, one that has a circular order, possesses a variable form. And yet, in preserving His eternal nature, God would recreate Himself in overthrowing His old form and shaping a new one. This cosmic narrative maintains Ziedan’s viewpoint and presupposes his doctrine of anarchism and its style of rebellion.

Nevertheless, Ziedan further transforms rudiments of Christian theology where he Islamizes the idea of the Virgin and Jesus, using the dialectical method of Socrates. The

conversation between Reverend Nestorios and Hypa in scroll seventeen resulted in a furious reception of *Azazeel* when it was published in Egypt:

‘Does it make sense,’ he asked, ‘to believe that God suckled at the breast of the Virgin, and grew day by day until he was two months old, then three months, then four. The Lord is perfect, as it is written, so how could he take the form of a child, when the Virgin Mary was a human who gave birth from her immaculate womb by a divine miracle, and after her son became a manifestation of God and a savior of mankind. He was like a hole through which we have been able to see the light of God, or like a signet ring on which a divine message appeared. The fact that the sun shines through a hole does not make the hole a sun, just as the appearance of the message on the signet ring does not make the ring a message He is the only One, neither is He born nor does He die, but He is manifested at times and in occlusion at other times, in accordance with His will’ (203)

Regardless of the fact that the above claim from *Azazeel* had a negative impact on the contemporary reception of the book, Ziedan achieves the main purpose of his thesis in challenging religious convention and assuming the role of a philosopher. The views of William Soryan, like Plato before him, correspond to some of Ziedan’s higher purposes:

The writer is a spiritual anarchist, as in the depth of his soul every man is. He is discontented with everything and everybody. The writer is everybody’s best friend and only true enemy — the good and great enemy.

He neither walks with the multitude nor cheers with them. The writer who is a writer is a rebel who never stops. (Soryan 497)

Azazeel's Hypatia: The Woman Anarchist as Plato's Protagonist

Plato in his *Republic* allegorized the Supremacy of Good, outlining the duty of the philosopher and the dangers he/she might face in the quest for Truth. This prepares us for the time when the ancient Greeks as well as the Egyptians of the pre-Christian era revered philosophy above all other disciplines. During this era, the philosopher's responsibility is to enlighten the many. However, Youssef Ziedan chose a later, more complicated historical context for *Azazeel*. The transitional phase between the old pagan beliefs and the new Christian absolutism was once considered anarchist. The novel contemplates the injustices incurred by any deviations from the dominant belief system. In such a situation, the philosopher, who once represented established thought, is now burdened with the responsibility of enlightening the people as to what is the "Shadow" and what is "Truth." Plato suggests that the philosopher who does not seek power but wields an enlightened use of it is better prepared to avoid the usual situation in which rivalry determines the outcome of political conflict: "Political power should be in the hands of people who aren't enamoured of it. Otherwise their rivals in love will fight them for it" (Plato 249). However, even the enlightened philosopher runs the risk of injury when ruling over those who lack genuine knowledge.

It is almost a historical fact that every individual who deviates from the herd and dares to challenge the established habits of an authority ends as a martyr. For the shadows of Plato's Allegory symbolize not only preconceived belief systems but also refer to the oppressive practices that an authority imposes to convince the people of his legitimacy.

Hiding behind the slogans of honor, patriotism, duty, religion, or even God himself, these oppressive ideas are carefully planted within the public sphere to serve power. Anyone who questions the motives of these slogans or attempts to justify a truth other than the one set by established authority is considered a traitor, a dissident, an atheist, or a descendent of the devil.

Ziedan's Hypatia stands out as a paradigm of the anarchist philosopher who challenged not only the new guise of Christian faith in ancient Alexandria but also the authority of patriarchal thought. Hypatia was a pagan woman who worshipped philosophy and taught a devout Christian man. Hypatia took upon herself the same burden that Jesus Christ assumed to enlighten humanity on the essence of tolerance, peace, and love. She sought to guide the multitude away from the shadows of race, religion, and gender. In scroll nine, the writer introduces her as "The Sister of Jesus" (107). This involves a powerful comparison, one with many possible interpretations but is revealed strongly in her mind and life purpose. Like Jesus, Hypatia lived in dark times when the shadows of Plato's Cave lurked behind every word uttered by the all-powerful Christian Church. In such a situation, the people of Alexandria remain prisoners of their own religion, following what they were shown as "the light of Christ" (118).

Hypatia tried valiantly to fulfill her duty as a philosopher by exposing falsehood and guiding the Christians in ancient Alexandria to spiritual truths. She did so by sacrificing herself like Jesus to prove that the people had long abandoned the commands of their Lord and the Divine path. By describing Hypatia as the 'Sister of Jesus', the writer (either Hypa or Ziedan) places her on an equal footing with humanity's most revered anarchist, Christ. Thus, the writer bonds a pagan philosopher not only to a saint

but rather to the ultimate representation of faith. Similarly, Christianity had once been a way of thinking that departed from the values of the multitude. Even Christ moved in the realm of the shadows until the crucifixion exposed the darkness of pagan authority.

The subsequent analogies that the writer draws show a similarity between Hypatia and Jesus: “Hypatia had . . . the appearance of Jesus the Messiah, combining grace with majesty . . .” (108-9). Her way of life deeply contradicts that of Bishop Cyril, reminding us that “Jesus the Messiah began his great mission among the people, not between walls amidst monks and priests” (115). The writer takes up this point each time Cyril is mentioned in the text and more explicitly contrasts the Christian Bishop and Jesus. The appearance of the Bishop impacts his purpose, setting him far afar from his Savior:

Jesus’s clothes were old rags, torn at the chest and most of his limbs, while the bishop’s clothes were embellished with gold thread all over, so that his face was hardly visible. Jesus’s hands were free of the baubles of our world, while the bishop held what I think was a scepter made of pure gold On his head Jesus had his crown of thorns, while the bishop had on his head the bright gold crown of a bishop. Jesus seemed resigned as he assented to sacrifice himself on the cross of redemption. Cyril seemed intent on imposing his will on the heavens and the earth. (117)

By distancing Cyril from Christ and bonding Hypatia to him, the writer distinguishes the shadows from the Truth. The anarchist philosopher brings to view both aspects of life.

Azazeel’s Villain: Cyril and Power as the Antithesis of the Anarchist

An anarchist is an anti-authorial figure who is caught in a dichotomy between oppression and power. It is unnecessary for this figure to suffer oppression, yet it is quite

essential for him to be against power at all times. Whether power is benevolent or maleficent is irrelevant. For anarchism seeks to restore balance; it does not seek merely to eliminate power but to re-distribute it, strip it of its absolutism and tendency towards dominance: “Within Judaism, the prophets of the Old Testament challenged Kings and proclaimed what is known as the ‘Social Gospel’. . . . Within Christianity, Jesus came for the poor and weak, and the early Christians resisted the Roman State” (Walter 3). However, after it became the religion of the Roman State, Christianity waged wars against libertarian notions and perceptions of Christ. In *Azazeel*, the reader observes anarchism transformed into power through the figure of Bishop Cyril. The text presents him as an epitome of a once anarchist religion that has become fanatical, power hungry and driven by the desire for absolute domination.

However, Cyril’s ascent to absolute power only gradually becomes evident in his speeches throughout the text. It is commonly understood that a dictator only listens to the sound of his own voice. But what of a Bishop who supposedly speaks the word of God? Does this allow him to condemn anyone who seeks a different truth? To the Bishop, the multitude can only have one absolute Truth; otherwise, power would be lost amongst different truths and pose a direct threat to his authority as the leading representative of “pastoral power” (Foucault 332):

[Thus, he] will not allow any review of the beliefs of a philosopher who died a century and a half ago, a philosopher who worked on theology and went astray and committed heresy, a philosopher whose ordination as a priest was invalid. Let his followers, the Tall Brothers hold their tongues . . . and cease stirring up trouble and heretical notions which threaten the

true faith, the true faith which we have devoted our lives to defend, as righteous soldiers of Jesus Christ. (119)

But in reality, who is to say what beliefs should be reviewed and what should not? And who or what defines ‘true faith’? Is not faith a spiritual relationship between a god and a worshipper that is so sacred and sublime that it knows no limitations?

Another instance of Cyril’s strong motivation to repress potential anarchism is displayed in scroll seventeen, which concerns the study of the sciences:

Perhaps it would be appropriate for us to send him to Akhmim, because the people there face tests of faith. In recent years many people from here have fled there and many people there are studying sciences which are of no benefit” “[A]nd what, your Holiness, are the sciences which are of no benefit, that I might know them and make sure I avoid them?” “Good monk, they are the absurdities of the heretics and the delusions of those who devote themselves to astronomy, mathematics, and magic” (207)

Cyril’s instruction clearly demonstrates a lack of respect for the natural sciences which were once esteemed as the keys to understanding both the universe and human existence. If he allowed a monk to study logic-based sciences, power would be scrutinized and reason would replace blind faith. If the basis for power is inconsistent with the natural order of the things, as Kropotkin explained, then the educated monk might be able to dispel the shadows on which power relies. And that is precisely why Cyril (the pastoral power) would deny his subjects the tools allowing for rebellion, preferring a totalitarian method of rule.

Tolstoy's views on the psychology of power suggest why absolute dominance rejects change and the anarchist concept of natural balance:

Men who are used to the existing order of things, who like it and dread its being changed, try to take the doctrine as a collection of revelations and rules which one can accept without their modifying one's life. While Christ's teaching is not only a doctrine which gives rules which a man must follow, it unfolds a new meaning in life, and defines a whole world of human activity quite different from all that has preceded it and appropriate to the period on which man is entering. (*Kingdom of God* 48)

Tolstoy's creed stands in firm contrast to Cyril's. For Tolstoy, Christianity is a doctrine of radical change, not in its form but rather in its essence. In other words, Christianity is essentially opposed to the status quo and introduces a new order of life that is completely unlike the pagan conception (*Kingdom of God* 48). Cyril's speeches and ecclesiastical management, although Christian in form, strongly deviate from the essence of Christianity. In truth, Cyril never abandons the pagan conception of life. For Azazeel, this conception attaches itself to the existing order where the status quo is the source of power. In contrast, the Christian conception of life opens itself to the new spiritual humanism that was brought into the world by an anarchist who challenged paganism.

More to the point, Cyril's type of power enters the picture unexpectedly when "the Bishop, or Pope, as they call him in Alexandria, turned and disappeared behind the door to the pulpit amidst a group of senior priests holding crosses bigger than any I had ever seen" (119). The cross in Christianity is a symbol of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for mankind, but what happens if the message behind a symbol changes? Then most certainly

the rules and the form of the symbol will change accordingly. A symbol does not retain its message on the basis of size but through belief; however, the big crosses in the background of Cyril's warning threaten anyone who would follow the anarchist philosopher and question the power of Cyril himself.

Eventually, sovereign power reaches its peak in the speech where Cyril urges "the children of the Lord" to "cut out the tongues of those who speak evil". Such are, to him, the likes of the pagan philosophers and the free thinkers who threaten the Christian faith and "taint" the earth with their thoughts (122). In a fiery speech, Cyril declares a ruthless war against the anarchist philosopher, Hypatia, and represents the established power at a time when Christianity suggests the anarchist alternative:

Lord Jesus Christ spoke truly when he spoke with a tongue of fire, saying, 'The truth will set you free.' So, children of the Lord, free your land from the defilement of the pagans, cut out the tongues of those who speak evil, throw them and their wickedness into the sea and wash away the mortal sins. Follow the words of the Saviour, the words of truth, the words of the Lord. Know that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to us his children in all times when he said: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword'. (122 - 23)

Cyril's self-righteousness sharply contrasts with the essence of Christian tolerance and the teachings of Christ. What Jesus once forbade, his Church in ancient Alexandria promotes. Moreover, Cyril denounces an anarchist morality that commands, 'Thou shalt not kill' (Exodus 20:13). What Ziedan presents in Cyril is a carnivorous villain who seeks not faith but rather the destruction of the opposition and those who disagree with his own faction, whether it be a pagan woman philosopher or a liberal Christian. To preserve his

power, he re-defines evil, the Christian commandments and the nature of Christ to suit his authority and deny the balance of power that can be found in nature.

Truth as the Essence of Anarchism and Space as its Form

In Ziedan's *Azazeel*, the once firmly established pagan religion as represented by its lofty temples and the worship of the old god is now the seat of anarchism (the new Christian religion), manifesting its newly acquired power through the conversion of these same temples into Christian churches. Space in this context provides the setting for the old power just as it provides the setting for the newly arrived anarchist.

The monastery is what is left of an old building which might go back to pre-Roman times, certainly a long time. Some of the monks here think that at first it was probably a castle or the home of a forgotten leader. But because I am familiar with the temples in my native country, those which are still standing and those which are from the centuries which have elapsed, I am sure the monastery building was a temple in former times. In fact it was a magnificent temple. (158)

Those temples are taken by the God of Christianity, who has not yet come to occupy the position of power. The new God assumes the cross and the Church as his props, but His essence remains the same, eternal and absolute.

However, if God is Truth, and Truth is variable, then by definition God Himself is variable, a viewpoint espoused by Nietzsche before it was later developed by contemporary thinkers like Ziedan:

Will to truth is a making firm, a making true and durable, an abolition of the false character of things, a reinterpretation of it into beings. "Truth" is

therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered—but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will to overcome that has in itself no end—introducing truth, as a *processus in infinitum*, an active determining—not a becoming conscious of something that is in itself firm and determined. It is a word for the “will to power.” (Nietzsche, 298)

Ziedan’s Sufist approach to Truth is opposed to relativism, but Ziedan and Nietzsche agree on the meaning of Truth as a value, one that is created rather than discovered. A God/Truth “live[s] in the hearts of the people who believe in them” so that “if the people die out, the gods are buried with them, just as . . . the last few priests who were besieged in the big temple at the south of Elephantine Island must all have died by now and their temple must have been demolished or been converted into a church for a new god” (159).

Although Nietzsche’s goal is to allude to the meaninglessness of life and the tediousness of historical repetition, anarchism can be considered in terms of his doctrine of eternal recurrence, which in some respects might be said to substantiate it. Here a provisional formulation of the doctrine that can be found in Nietzsche’s notebooks:

In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the

world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game ad infinitum. (Nietzsche 549)

The doctrine of Eternal Recurrence postulates a sequence of repeated episodes that will remain so for eternity. Accordingly, every major historical event, including anarchic rebellions resulting in a change in the status quo, is repeatable and continues the same within a circular dimension. If life is based on various conflicts, then it is only logical to deem Good and Evil, God and the Devil, the Old and the New, as locked in eternal recurrence; hence, each of these notions constantly seeks to replace the other through an act of transgression that harbors a change of form (power) in relation to an essence (natural balance).

Eventually, after Christianity replaced paganism, the quest for Truth was locked within the cycle of life and a new question came into perspective: Who is God? Is He better defined by Cyril's church or by that of Reverend Nestorius? This question is capable of sparking a rebellion in thought because it concerns Truth and its value. But in this case, we need to ask whether truth resides among the gods of the once mighty temples or with the new Christian God who defied pagan rule in the human world. Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence, if seen in this perspective, might be interpreted as a contribution to anarchism in which the act of rebellion is imperative to denying the power of absolutism in favor of cosmic equilibrium.

Chapter 2:

The Humanist Satyr as Anarchist Thinker

This chapter is primarily concerned with the intellectual dynamics that constitute anarchism. Anarchists understand that power is built on the promotion of oppressive notions that together place a specific category, person, social class or ideology on top of all others, therefore producing essentialism and paving the way for totalitarian rule. With the passing of time, an ingrained set of prejudices/notions forms the pillar that supports a given structure of power. Our need to deconstruct this power becomes imperative: Once power becomes the new absolute god, the anarchist needs to follow a definite procedure to accomplish “the act of transgression” and consequently achieve liberation or rather the natural balance that has been disrupted by radical disequilibrium. The first strategy was highlighted in Chapter One, which described the philosophical anarchist as someone who questions religious history and reconsiders the meaning of God, previously misunderstood as an embodiment of absolute power. But the second and perhaps the more important of these procedures is introduced by the intellectual anarchist whose performances mount a challenge to the system as a whole. In this case, the anarchist figure is the clown who calls attention to the limitations of the prevailing system. This political procedure questions the credibility of oppressive ideologies, thus stimulating the minds of the oppressed to perceive imposed notions in a negative light.

Concerning the second type, humorous satire is the main tool that the clown anarchist uses to convey his message, “for humor . . . is nothing less than a fresh window of the soul. Through that window we see not indeed a different world, but the familiar world of our own experience distorted as if by the magic of some tricky sprite. It is a

plate-glass window, which turns all our earnest, toiling fellow-mortals into figures of fun” (Knox 52-3). Humor is the clown’s way of telling the truth through a clever lie, where kings or queens or any power agents constitute the core of his critique. The cover up for the clown is that he is normally not to be taken seriously yet his influence is finally converted into action by the people. In this situation, the center of power is perplexed as to what started it all. Still, over time and through the course of history, the powerful begin to recognize the dangers a clown might pose to their authority. Hence, clowns—especially those following the Juvenalian method of satire—are targets of power when power is the target of their anarchist performances. To put it in simpler terms, the anarchist clown becomes both the hunter and the prey of power.

In this chapter, I will discuss the serious side of the clown, the purpose and nature of satire, and how anarchist thinkers struggle against absolute power. The objective of this chapter is to prove that the clown is mainly a humanist satyr whose main weapons are wit and humour. In this context, I will primarily discuss Chaplin’s film, *The Great Dictator*, together with notions of anarchist society as promulgated by Tolstoy and Kropotkin, while also engaging Derrida’s theory of deconstruction as a tool in my analysis. The film itself was released around 1940 in the context of World War II. The screenplay is about two identical stock characters, the Jewish barber/tramp and the dictator/evil aristocrat. After World War I, the barber suffers a state of amnesia and is held in a hospital for years. When he finally goes back home, everything about the country he once fought for turns against him merely on the basis that he is a poor Jew. The plot unfolds and coincidence leads the barber’s identity to be confused among the dictator’s men as their

leader. The film ends with a high rhetorical speech by the barber disguised as the dictator on the morals of humanism calling his people to unite against the tyrannical oppressors.

Satire, Anarchism and Power

It is the beauty of satire to deconstruct power, for no satire ever targets the oppressed but rather those who oppress others. Satire and anarchism have one target in common and that is power. As “satire has long been recognized as an expression of attack,” anarchism is an attack on power (Test 14). In an interview compiled by Kevin Hayes, Chaplin reflects on the fact “that power can always be made ridiculous. The bigger that fellow gets the harder my laughter will hit him” (Hayes 92). Thus, every anarchist is a satirist but not every satirist is an anarchist. Where anarchism is strongly opposed to absolute power, satire recognizes that power provides a rich material for evoking laughter. And whenever laughter and ridicule are present, we cannot overlook the image of the clown, for he has been the ambassador of satire since its earliest beginnings.

As Shakespeare puts it in *Hamlet*, satire as a strategy “is a mirror [held] up to nature /to show virtue her own feature/scorn her own image/and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure” (Shakespeare, III.ii, 387). From the Greek classics to modern times, satire almost never deviated from this purpose. The rudimentary goal of any satire is to show deficiencies, magnify them, and urge people to laugh at themselves, thus presenting the ultimate punishment, or, in some cases, offering guidance and advice. But satire does not normally indicate vices directly but rather calls attention to the vices that we take for granted. In other words, satire is not primarily aimed at vice but at the naturalization of vice. In its beginnings, satire targeted our perverse disregard for virtue, duty or norm. But as it evolved and transcended its original spatial and temporal

boundaries, satire developed a purpose more consistent with its aggressive nature. It began to confront the established power and the twisted norms that are veiled by either society or the State and are presented as essential to the welfare of mankind. Thus, satire acquired a new significance and indispensability when it stripped preconceived concepts of their credibility.

Satiric responses to modern political doctrines like Communism, Fascism or Nazi ideology allow us to clarify this argument. They are more or less, one could argue, faces of the same deceit, different modes of human categorization and essentialism that place one race or type of people on the top of the pyramid whilst the rest are relegated to the status of second-rate human beings with lesser rights. Whether Germany, Italy or USSR, the result seems to be similar. But satirists do not primarily focus on the oppression these regimes tend to impose on non-conformists but on the naturalization of their respective ideologies. An anarchist satyr would attack the root of power itself, not the branches stemming from it. Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* offers a very useful argument for considering the practices of an anarchist satyr in a new political context (109-133). Power to Foucault is more of an ideology or a creed rather than a mere sovereign. Therefore, Hitler or Mussolini alone is not power, but rather Nazism or Fascism constitute the root upon which dictators use power to reach absolutism. As previously argued, an anarchist's sole ambition is to deny power from becoming absolute in order to maintain the *natural balance*. The practices of the satyr must be understood in this context. The question then becomes: How does one redefine power and deny it the path to absolutism? And the answer to that question, although simple in its utterance, is incredibly complicated. If power is the (political) construction of a system of thought, then one needs to demolish

the pillars upon which it rests in order to challenge it. And that is precisely when satire, as related to sarcasm and buffoonery, can be shown to take apart the oppositions that govern power in its many institutional forms.

We might compare anarchism to aspects of what is called *deconstruction*, a philosophical practice that contains an anarchist element. Christopher Norris defines “deconstruction” as a series of moves, which include the dismantling of conceptual oppositions and hierarchical systems of thought, and an unmasking of ‘aporias’ and moments of self-contradiction in philosophy (19). It might be said that deconstruction is a way of reading texts—particularly, philosophical texts—with the intention of making texts question themselves, forcing them to take account of their own contradictions and exposing the antagonisms they have ignored or repressed (Newman 116). Deconstruction in its basic, most generic form, addresses any text or system of thought, enabling the reader to peel off each layer of misconception that power has used to create the illusion of absolutism. In a similar way, anarchists reveal power to be what it is in reality. In the case of Fascism and Nazism, a fundamental racism emerges as the key to understanding how both systems employ the psychological exploitation of the masses to achieve their ends.

At the same time, we must be careful to spell out how deconstruction offers criticism of certain interpretations of anarchism when it warns us that a simple “inversion” does not constitute a profound challenge to any system of oppression. Ironically, oppressive systems of thought and the political regimes accompanying them were initially born as a reaction to another power that once sought to subjugate them. By turning power relations upside down, we do not necessarily challenge the system that generated the system in the

first place. The act of replacing one oppressive power with another is what Derrida calls *inversion* that has performed an unfortunate role in the history of revolutionary Marxism:

Inverting the terms of the binary leaves intact the hierarchical structure of the binary division. Such a strategy of revolution or inversion only reaffirms the place of power in the very attempt to overthrow it. We have seen the way in which Marxism fell victim to this logic of place by replacing the bourgeois state with the equally authoritarian workers' state. We have also seen the anarchists, in their attack on state power, merely replace it with a new logic of power and authority, this time based on human essence. [. . .] In other words, in order avoid the lure of place, one must go beyond both the anarchic desire to destroy hierarchy, as well as the mere reversal of terms. This only reinscribes hierarchy in a different guise: in the case of anarchism, a humanist guise. Rather, as Derrida suggests, if one wants to avoid this trap, then the hierarchical structure itself, its place, must be transformed. (Newman 118)

In response to Newman, an anarchist might say that anarchism is a philosophy of life, rather than merely a practical inversion. Anarchists theorize that the root of many problems can be discovered in the way that power has been used to maintain unnatural hierarchies. But the practical solution is not to acquiesce to new forms of authority that merely reproduces the old. Behind the use of satire as a political weapon is the anarchist belief, "I will not rule, and also ruled I will not be!" (289). The suspension of rule is not the reinvention of authority but the transformation of politics into a more festive sphere of common life.

The Clown Anarchist: Chaplin's Method of Satire

What is so intriguing about Charlie Chaplin, an actor who makes people laugh without saying a word? Certainly the answer to this question cannot be derived entirely from his films, which were not always completely successful in the box office. The answer is better related to a philosophical matter that stems from the significance of the artist himself. Chaplin is of significance not only to the 1930s and 40s because his message is of universal interest. Why? Because Chaplin is the clown who espouses a cause; he is an anti-nationalist in a world of nationalists; and he is the satyr of an era. He once said about himself: "I'm an iconoclast. I love to tear things apart. I don't like them as they are" (qtd. in Hayes 51). The role of Chaplin, although controversial, has a concrete basis in what the man himself achieved as an artist. Chaplin loved to test the limits of art, and to him art is buffoonery that comes with a purpose.

Dionysian in parts and Juvenalian in others, Chaplin almost never misses an opportunity to put a 'mirror up to nature' and mock society, politics, or even religion for naturalizing oppression and overestimating power. Like a Greek satyr, the figure was half man and half goat. But while Chaplin's hat, tie, moustache, jacket and tight vest might have fooled the audience and given the screen an aristocrat of sorts, we observe how the lower half of this figure, with over-sized pants and ill-fitting shoes, return us to the image of the clown. And yet, the clown is half serious, half fool. Like Shakespeare, Chaplin loved to present morsels of wisdom and subtle criticism through the guise of humor. Ironically, both Shakespeare and Chaplin show us that the most sublime philosophical

thought comes from clowns, not from the highest cerebral mindset of the upper class. Chaplin himself often points that “I’m the clown, and what can I do that is more effective than to laugh at these fellows who are putting humanity to the goose-step, who . . . are kicking humanity around” (qtd. in Hayes 92). Chaplin is able to challenge power and the conformist ideologies that follow in its wake by invoking the very philosophy and purpose of the clown. One normally does not see Chaplin’s sarcasm or satire except through the conflict between the rich and the poor, the physically strong and the weak, the powerful and impotent. (The word “sarcasm” derives from sarkazein, “to strip off the flesh”, and therefore goes beyond the modern idea of mockery; see *Harper* n.pag.) But out of a thwarted strange dialectic, Chaplin is able to produce his scathing jokes.

The Great Dictator is an enormous joke in which Chaplin, the clown anarchist, brought these conflicts to the screen and placed both the thesis of power (Hitler) and the anti-thesis of rebellion (Hynkel) next to one another for the audience to see through the folly of fundamentalism on both the political and psychological levels. From that confrontation, Chaplin’s sole aspiration is to strip Hitler, whose power augmented to match that of a god, from his divine status and to unveil his moral and mental deficiencies to the world, and thus to deconstruct the basis on which Hitler constructs his absolute power. The clown deconstructs order, as represented by Hitler, to dissociate power from a false absolute and hence to restore a natural balance. The gesture of rebellion that a clown anarchist uses in this situation is satiric in intent.

Perhaps the best example that can be used to illustrate this strategy is the dance with the globe. “Dictator of all the world!” says Hynkel. “They will worship you as a God!” continues Garbitsch. “No, no, you mustn’t say it. You make me afraid of myself,” Hynkel

simpers, leaps across the room, and shins up a window curtain. “Nation after nation will capitulate!” promises Garbitsch. “Leave me, I want to be alone!” says Hynkel. With Garbitsch gone, Hynkel slides down the curtain and, to the strains of the Prelude to Wagner’s “Lohengrin,” begins toying with the globe. Rapaciously studying countries to be conquered, he embraces the now balloon-like globe, lifting it, spinning it, bouncing it, kicking it, butting it with his head, dancing with it, jumping (in slow motion). It is a scene that entralls one, simultaneously with its wit, its irony, its fantasy and its ballet grace. An overly strong embrace finally bursts the balloon. Breaking into tears, Hynkel sobs on his desk (Huff 272).

The pantomime in this scene calls attention to Hitler’s mental instability. Chaplin, although disguised as a clown-like Hitler, mocks the dictator’s delusional psyche. On the screen, he draws a picture of a spoiled child playing with something that could not be, by any logic, a toy. The clown mimics the spoiled child when he destroys the non-toy (world) and cries over it as if its existence is to bring him pleasure. On this front, Chaplin says: “I laugh at the dictators—but they are not inhuman, really, in the picture. At one point—listen—at one point as the dictator I do a dance with the world—around a big globe that is the map of the world. And there the poor madman is something else than ridiculous: he is one little man with the whole wide, vast unconquerable world, and he thinks the world is his” (qtd. in Hayes 92). What Chaplin attempts and succeeds in achieving is to revisit the moments that would make dictators, such as Hitler, look insane and even pitiful, while mocking those moments that call attention to their construction of absolute power. Hitler’s speeches on numerous occasions contain instances like these

when he repeatedly referred to world power and conquest, just as Chaplin portrays him on the screen, as a spoiled child with incredible power and also the capability to destroy.

Chaplin uses Hynkel's first speech to present a satirical study of political rhetoric. Its clever derivations and use of German echo real Hitler speeches. Thus, we see Adenoid Hynkel on a platform haranguing the sons and daughters of the Double Cross, in German-English double-talk. "Wiener Schnitzel, lager beer, und sauerkraut" Here we find marvelous mimicry of the Hitler delirium, with a pursed-lip rendering of German gutturals—"mit der ach hie," etc., ending in a coughing spell. The tirade continues. The official radio translator's rendering: "Yesterday Tomania was down but today it has risen." Hynkel pauses to moisten his gullet, also pouring a glassful down his pants. Silencing the crowd with a limp salute, he goes on, "Democratia shtunk!" (Translator: "Democracy smells.") "Libertad shtunk!" ("Liberty is odious!") "Frei sprachen shtunk!" ("Free speech is objectionable!") Tomania has the greatest army and navy in the world, but "we must sacrifice, tighten der belten." As his tirade becomes more violent and completely unintelligible, the microphones recoil. The translator explains that the Fuehrer has just referred to the Jewish people. Flourish of hands, raising of fists, gorilla drumming on the chest, the cursing of every country in the world . . . "all shtunken," but Tomania. The urbane translator renders this as an offer of peace to the rest of the world (Huff 267).

Compared to a Hitler speech, especially the ones given in the context of the Second World War, Hynkel's speech is like a Nazi text dipped in buffoonery (see Hitler speeches in the war section of Beare and Lowne). Chaplin's method of satirizing power lies mainly in mimicking Hitler's own methods of winning over crowds through high and low voice

intonations, minus the meaning. It would be impossible not to laugh at a Hitler speech after seeing Chaplin's version in the Hynkel speeches. What Chaplin has done is give us his own version of Hitler in the high-pitched voice of a blabbing clown. This impersonation shows us that the dictator's sole source of power comes from the microphone and the dramatic performance of a speech. The few jests of pantomime that Hynkel uses throughout the speech are mostly Chaplin's own comments or side jokes on Hitler himself. To the anarchist clown, step one is to deprive power of its tools of oppression by means of ridicule. Thus, if power is shown to be ridiculous, it is definitely more vulnerable to step two, which is a more blunt attack.

In what we might call deconstruction, Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* strips power's emissaries of their tools of oppression, bit by bit. In deconstructing its political techniques, Chaplin shows how power is finally left defenseless against "an act of transgression" through a rebellion against established norms (Boal 57-94). Out of this quasi-dialectical confrontation between the anarchist and power comes the synthesis that introduces a new-born power, thus weakening what seemed to be absolute and restoring the equilibrium of the natural balance.

Anarchist Humanism: Chaplin's Final Speech

One main argument in favour of anarchist thought is that it is humanist in essence. Anarchists do not seek the destruction of authority but rather the education of humanity to encourage a harmonious co-existence that depends on the laws of morality. The destruction or deconstruction of authority is merely a step in the course of building a humane society. In that regard, Peter Kropotkin states in a 1910 entry in *The*

Encyclopaedia Britannica that the Stoic philosopher, Zeno of Crete, rather than Plato, helps us understand anarchism as a new basis for organizing human communities:

He repudiated the omnipotence of the State, its intervention and regimentation, and proclaimed the sovereignty of the moral law of the individual—remarking already that, while the necessary instinct of self-preservation leads man to egotism, nature has supplied a corrective to it by providing man with another instinct—that of sociability. When men are reasonable enough to follow their natural instincts, they will unite across the frontiers and constitute the Cosmos. They will have no need of law-courts or police, will have no temples and no public worship, and use no money—free gifts taking the place of the exchanges. (Kropotkin 5-6)

Anarchism belongs to the stoic tradition in the sense that it is essentially based on codes of moral behavior. One word for an enlightened morality in the contemporary context could be humanism. Thus, if anarchism harbors a kind of stoic resistance to power, then one could maintain that its political stance is not only as ethical and moral but also humanist. The promotion of Zeno's version of the ideal society, as one that needs no laws nor a regimentation of any sort, adheres to the argument that anarchism is in its core a humanist concept.

To further illustrate this point, Chaplin's final speech in *The Great Dictator* finds its roots in the Tolstoyan view of anarchist morality. In his works, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and "On Anarchy", Tolstoy understands the notion of a governed society as compliance with sin, whereas an ideal society should need no protection from

authority/government since it is based on a moral code that informs the life of every individual.

The Anarchists are right in everything; in the negation of the existing order, and in the assertion that, without Authority, there could not be worse violence than that of Authority under existing conditions. They are mistaken only in thinking that Anarchy can be instituted by a revolution. But it will be instituted only by there being more and more people who do not require the protection of governmental power (“On Anarchy” 22)

Tolstoy’s “existing order” is Nazism/Fascism in *the Great Dictator*, while the film uses anarchist satire to help create a world in which “more and more people who do not require the protection of governmental power” can achieve a better way of life.

Chaplin starts off with a repudiation of dictatorship that dismisses this notion as wholly unethical when he seeks to “help everyone if possible, Jew, Gentile, black men, white” (*My Autobiography* 393). He then reminds his audience of the morality latent in human nature in order to raise the consciousness of his listeners and to alert them to the atrocities that the war has already caused. In the first quarter of the speech, Chaplin points out the paradoxes that come with human progress and technological development as “we have developed speed but shut ourselves in [so that] our knowledge has made us cynical, our cleverness hard and unkind; we think too much and feel too little’ This statement of truth speaks to a universal audience, not only a European one. Later in the speech, Chaplin transforms his tone to fit a preacher, and with a series of metaphors, using powerful diction and imagery, Chaplin conjures the horrific darkness of the contemporary world and then introduces a small ray of hope when says, “do not despair:

the misery that is upon us is but the passing of greed [. . .] The hate of men will pass and dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people” Following these words, we come to this claim: “so long as men die, liberty will never perish”. Up until this point, Chaplin’s voice intonations are relatively hushed but certain.

Nevertheless, the climax of Chaplin’s speech comes with an almost aggressive and imperative tone that punctuates the middle. He shifts his pitch radically from low to high with the utterance, “Soldiers”, a word signifying authority, even though Chaplin himself repeatedly satirized all authorial forms. He could have said “Brothers”, which would have had almost the same impact, instead of suggesting the standpoint of his opponents. But he then moves to dehumanize dictators and oppressors all over the world, describing them as “brutes, machine men with machine minds and machine hearts” (395). Thus placing the audience and the dictators in two circles, the self and the anti-self; where the audience/soldiers are “not machines” but those “machine men” who “enslave [them]” are different, “unloved” and “un-natural”.

Chaplin, the now very serious clown, needs to base his speech on firm grounds and thus offers his fiercest attack on dictatorship by alluding to the biblical citation: “The Kingdom of God is within man” (Luke 17:21). (Tolstoy composed a book that used this citation as its title. Whether or not Chaplin knew about Tolstoy’s contribution to anarchist thought remains an open question.). Offering an alternative reality to the harsh one that his audience endures, Chaplin presents a utopia and urges his listeners to fight for “a new world, a decent world that will give men a chance to work and old age security”, and then repeats his description of dictators as “brutes” who “by the promise of these things [. . .] have risen to power”. A very explicit declaration of war against authority follows when

Chaplin invites his audience to “fight to do away with national barriers”. His rejection of nationalism is couched in moral terms. In a few interviews, Chaplin further explains his view of patriotism and nationalism as a political concept: “I’m not a citizen, I don’t need citizenship papers, and I’ve never had patriotism in that sense for any country, but I’m a patriot to humanity as a whole. I’m a citizen of the world” (qtd. in Hayes 107).

A final note on the Great Dictator’s Speech is that Chaplin, in his deposition of power, uses many of the tools that are familiar to those who have studied fascist oratory. The ringing diction and charismatic language that is replete in vivid imagery are used to stimulate the minds and provoke the emotions of the audience, making it hard for us to distinguish between the oppressor and the clown. This particular impact is what Chaplin sought to divulge through anarchist satire in a film in which he does not seek “truth” but rather “effectiveness”. In his own words: “I don’t think in terms of common sense and, to be honest, I don’t search for truth. I search or effectiveness” (qtd. in Hayes 95). And yet, the anarchist implications of Chaplin’s methods leave the spectator with no doubt that the purpose of his film is to question the way that worldly power can threaten our human potential, thus aligning a liberating practice with a theory of politics that is predicated on the oneness of mankind.

Conclusion:

Anarchism in Theory and Practice

If the universe is defined by various oppositions, locked together in an eternal circle of recurrence or repetition, where one binary imposes its force over the other only temporarily until it is substituted by a more definitive force, then to express this theory in more familiar terms, we might name one side Power, the other Oppression. The anchor that holds both within the circle and ensures that no one side remains in place forever is anarchism. This thesis is divided into two chapters, “The Dissident Philosopher as the Anarchist Soul” and “The Clown: The Humanist Satyr as The Anarchist Mind.” By considering both theory and practice in the anarchist tradition, the thesis proposes to redefine anarchism through an interdisciplinary approach to literature, history and philosophy.

The Introduction seeks to clarify the philosophy and purpose behind the anarchist act of transgression/rebellion. It was claimed that revolution is born out of suppressed anger through which oppression is crystallized in the minds of the oppressed, and in a moment of clarity or simple rage, the need to release the self from oppression allows the rebel to rise up and take action. At the same time, the purpose of anarchist rebellion lies beyond the simple expression of rage against power. Anarchism seeks to demolish the absolutism of worldly power, regardless of the benevolence or malfeasance of that power. For in order to maintain harmony in the cosmos, a natural balance needs to be preserved and held in place; otherwise one form of power would reach its extreme peak and devour its opponent eternally, leaving the universe to suffer the consequences of losing an element that one way or another contributes to the circle of life.

Chapter One's rudimentary question is twofold: How is God to be understood in terms of anarchist thought, and how does anarchism seek to maintain a balance between fundamental oppositions in a spiritual narrative? The answer to this two-sided question is debatable but congruent with ancient and modern philosophical theories that are highly esteemed and widely considered. In exploring different aspects of this answer, I present a review of anarchist theories and systems as they emerge in literature, using them to confirm the core argument that anarchism's main end is to maintain a natural balance. The literary example used in this application is Youssef Ziedan's Sufi novel, *Azazeel*. In this context, I discuss Hypatia as a Platonic figure, Cyril as the antithesis of the anarchist and finally conclude with a discussion of how this novel presents us with an anarchist view of truth.

Where Kropotkin's creed mainly approaches anarchism through the scientific workings of the universe, Tolstoy's anarchism essentially opposes, not Christian faith, but the shadows imposed by the organized Church on the Truth of obedience, tolerance and Christian love. His anarchism is intended to restore the commandments of Jesus. Bakunin, on the other hand, traces the genealogy of anarchist thought to the story of genesis, giving its reader the first rebel in history, the Devil. By interpreting this tale allegorically, Bakunin places the term in a strictly neutral arena where it cannot belong either to God or the Devil but rather to human nature. Kristeva chooses to create her concept of the dissident writer in terms of the literary text itself. Finally, Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence, if compared with Kropotkin's, suggests how anarchism can be an act of rebellion that changes the status quo in order to maintain universal equilibrium and to deny domination of absolute authority. All of these anarchist concepts

echo in Ziedan's *Azazeel*, giving this text its controversial flavor and making it one of the most significant literary works on Sufist thought in contemporary writing.

Chapter One offers insight into the consciousness of the anarchist, but in this context, consciousness is not only represented by the protagonist, Hypa, nor the woman philosopher, Hypatia, but also by the writer himself; Youssef Ziedan. This means that my discussion is largely concerned with Ziedan's own perspectives on the nature of God and with his experiments in transcending the boundaries of writing in the composition of *Azazeel*. Ziedan creates an alternative history for his reader to re-imagine what happened at a time of chaos in ancient Alexandria; he also allows his readers to see themselves mirrored in the protagonist according to the Islamic adage, {وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا * فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا } ("By the soul, and That which shaped it and inspired it to lewdness and godfearing" (Al-Shams 91:5), and in the Christian belief that man must struggle spiritually between good and evil, or God and the Devil. Ziedan in this regard is an anarchist who combines both religions, perhaps for the first time, as one doctrine of thought that defies the convention in modern and ancient writings that speak of two religions with separate essences.

Chapter Two asks a different question, namely: Is anarchism basically devoted to a humanist agenda, or rather is it mainly about direct resistance to the symbols of absolute power? In dealing with this question, a political context is introduced. Thus, amidst the Second World War, Nazi and Fascist ideologies rise to the fore, elaborating a discourse of power that anarchist satire seeks to demolish. By employing aspects of Derrida's deconstruction, we examine how Chaplin's satire addresses rebellion through the anarchist act of transgression. With the clown as the rebel seeking to unveil the

atrocities of absolute power through ridicule, Chaplin's film, *The Great Dictator*, is a mirror held up to nature in the sense that it satisfies both sides of the classical adage: it entertains and educates. The film is nonetheless a modern example of the *commedia dell'arte*, presenting a stereotype of oppressor versus another stereotype of the oppressed. Chaplin's comedy through the mode of pantomime gives us a satiric version of a tyrant who magnifies his regime's vices so that, to the contemporary audience, they become less remote. In this tour de force, Chaplin uses satire as a practical tool for deconstructing the very basis for dictatorship and depriving propaganda of its power, while blurring the line between art and politics.

Chaplin's anti-nationalist views as expressed in the film's closing speech constitute the final blow to an oppressive regime that heavily depends on nationalist ideologies. This speech, far from humorous, is a wakeup call addressed to humanity, urging all men to shun oppressive practices and blood-thirsty aspirations to absolute power, and to embrace the notions of "freedom", "goodness in man", and "universal brotherhood". The utopia that Chaplin seeks to create in this speech is a genuine response to what Tolstoy and Kropotkin present as the philosophy of anarchism, which envisions a stateless society where individuals live solely by the principles of morality and are able to recognize one another as free and equal.

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