

Matt Hern, Am Johal
O My Friends, There is No Friend

Matt Hern is a founder and co-director of Solid State Community Industries.
Am Johal is the Director of SFU's Vancity Office of Community Engagement.

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The Politics of Friendship at the End of Ecology

[transcript]

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Reading Matt Hern and Am Johal's 'O, My Friends, There is no Friend: Community at the End of the Ecology' is coming up for intellectual air and being able to breath in a radical and charged thinking space at a time when we feel suffocated by the enclosures of blatant simplifications in face of global catastrophes, the ecological devastations of global warming and of colonial and racial violence – both near and far. Matt Hern and Am Johal's sharp theoretical intervention reminds us of the lethality that is inherent to the kind of proximity given by the institutional holdings, such as the modern polity, the family, or the (ethnic or biologic or historic) community. And they do so while offering a map of the contemporary contributions to political philosophy from which we can draw a mode of being together – amity!! – without these fixed institutional holdings which cannot but rehearse separability and, with that, enmity.

– Denise Ferreira da Silva, Professor, New York University, author of *Toward a Global Idea of Race and Unpayable Debt*

In O My Friends, Matt Hern and Am Johal search for a principle of solidarity unsubordinated to the nation-state and un beholden to its policing of borders, respectful of identities but not of their enclosure. They find it in friendship – not as we think we already know it, but as an “elusive, allusive and aspirational relational form” still to be invented as a political practice. The book launches a passionate, thought-provoking call for the collective invention of a new sociality of concern and mutual exposure.

– Brian Massumi, retired Professor in the Communications Department of the Universite de Montreal, author of *What Animals Teach Us about Politics*

Johal and Hern bring us a timely and inventive intervention when the political stakes couldn't be higher. We have not yet, or ever, solved the dilemma of friendship and community in times of crisis, but must return to critically examine their unique role and consequences to open up the potency of new radical political sequences and possibilities.

– Glen Coulthard, Associate Professor in First Nations and Indigenous Studies and Department of Political Science UBC, author of *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*

This unique and philosophical gem of a book possesses a generous and inquisitive spirit that reflects the nature of its subject matter. What is friendship, and can it be the basis of a politics that can resist and unmake the toxic tendencies and structures that currently imperil the communities and ecosystems on which our lives depend? There are no easy answers here, but rather considerations, provocations, complications, and an admirable refusal to settle for the lethal economic and conceptual status quo.

– Astra Taylor, Co-Founder of the Debt Collective, author of *The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together as Things Fall Apart*

Luscious thoughts about how we might imagine just, imperfect, unfinished and generative relationships in a world on fire.

– Lesley Wood, Associate Professor, Sociology, York University, author of *Crisis and Control: The Militarization of Protest Policing*

Hern and Johal offer an invitation to think differently through a concept that escapes easy definition or consolidation. Could friendship point to a quiet radicalism that resists orthodox narratives of power and management across interspecies divides and our own intra-species pluralities?

– Neal Cahoon, University of Lapland

An expansive, heartfelt book – at once unflinchingly cerebral and effortlessly poetic. Hern and Johal push the frame of friendship beyond the cloying and into the liberatory, inviting us to consider who we can be to each other in an era of calcifying borders, unravelling ecologies, and neoliberal shambling through the chaos of now.

– Avi Lewis, Associate Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia, director of *This Changes Everything*