

Year 2024 : Issue #6

Issue 6, the contents of which are:

Pg. 04 Oak: Left and Right of Center

-Steve Kirk, Editor

Pg. 07 Deserting the Tender Tyranny of Techno-Totalitarianism: an invitation (?)

-Wolfie Mae Landstreicher

Pg. 13 I've Heard

-raye schmalstig

Pg. 14 ...there must be no rivers, birds, or trees either

- Sascha Engel

Pg. 24 eclipse

-sean m huber

Pg. 25 Against Relevance

-Ocean

Pg. 27 How Philosophy Fails

-John Zerzan

Pg. 31 The Controlled Opposition of NPC Comrades

- Jason Rodgers

Pg. 36 The Snare

-sean m huber

Pg. 37 Under Our Feet, Not Over Our Heads

-Invecchiare Selvatico

Pg. 47 Cosmo Marvel

-Jason Rodgers

Pg. 47 Jesus the Radical Green Anarchist

-Bison Van Zanten

Pg. 51 Meditations on Irrationality

-Artxmis Graham Thoreau

Pg. 55 Returning Songs: Three Invitations from a Monistic World

-Tamarix and Bree

Pg. 63 What Wisdom?

- Jason Rodgers

Pg. 64 Revelation

- sean m huber

Pg. 65 Abreaction and Hide Tanning
- VOF
Pg. 69 "Remember Tomorrow"
- Michael Templeton
Pg. 73 For Alethéia. Against Comus, Against Erebus.
-Clare Follmann
Pg. 73 Chatbots and the Apocalypse
-John Zerzan
Pg. 79 An Anti-Civ Anarchist Response to the 'Genocidalist' Accusation
-James M. Van Lanen
Pg. 83 Reflection from an encampment.
-Artxmis Graham Thoreau
Pg. 85 Recalibration Towards Anarchy: A Rereading of Ayn Rand's Anthem
Pg. 90 Might (Rodgers on Ragnar Redbeard Part Two)
Pg. 93 Letter from The Contemptuous
Pg. 95 Letter from BB
Pg. 96 Review of James M Van Lanen's *Human Rewilding in the 21st Century*
Pg. 98 Review of Bob Black's *Justice, Primitive and Modern*
Pg. 99 Review of Jason Rodger's *War of Dreams*
Pg. 100 Technocrat's Guide to Necromancy
Pg. 108 Musings on a Tree
- J. Belard
Pg. 102 Rebirth Through Decay
-Jason Rodgers

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OAK

LEFT AND RIGHT OF CENTER

It seems increasingly no one can hit the mark. The bull's-eye. The previous era's conceit of precision and accuracy has retreated to a swirling utopian formlessness. Not a utopia where truth disappears but where it endlessly proliferates, and all arguments are arguments of absolute certainty. My truth is true because its velocity is undeniable! Pathetic. Stupid. Ubiquitous.

All liberation, from sex to morality, has a final resting point of endless meaning (it's ALL evaluative!). Every *thing* is given to the world of meaning and proof of purpose. Every single petty ideology laid on the alter of its theoretical functionality. Every single ideology expressed as a nodal brand, a simulation of singularity and self which provides the endless copy of degraded and tortured truth. You believe what you believe and so does everyone else. A total egalitarianism of mental and informational obesity.

Years ago there was a letter complaining about the "green" in *Green Anarchy* (they should consider another color!) and the absurdity of that letter did not diagnose the writer -- the absurdity itself and all our deep chuckles diagnosed that "age." We once could separate absurdity from supposed reality. We could know that there were, at base, if we looked hard enough, sides to choose.

Now one can survey the whole field of critical writing and generally assume that none of it is worth reading. *Oak* struggles against this onslaught of recycled contortion – a spell which pulls all potential thought into mechanization and all sense of self to nullity. All political issues now resolve solely based on their position in the poli-astrological universe, everything sits under a complexity of signs which hides under a veil of technicality. Technology's mythological character (in Roland Barthes' sense) of interlocking widgets of selfhood is perfectly obvious from a detached perspective. The masses are nowhere and that is really frightening. No more masses turned by the power of a singular propaganda, no more man of action and belief and conviction -- in other words we won a perverse victory. Not quite pyrrhic. But not too far off either. The "new radicalism" diagnosed by Christopher Lasch and now battered around by anachronistic YouTube personalities was perfectly capable of a total liberation of all strains of oppression, delivering them all to absolute zero. Frozen in the immovable cold. An evaporation of the atmosphere which potentiated authentic thought. Everywhere the chains are broken and the cages rearranged and no one seems even the slightest interested in talking about anything other than Trump and the reenactment of global conflict, which our molecularly dispersed imperial center cries over (unless it's a dead Russian).

The Subject, the center of nodal existence (supposedly), consumed by the object of its existence becomes, as Jason Rodgers has it, a nonplayer character (NPC). No more mass, only roles; no more crowd, only convergence of quantized belief. A slick nothing which we slip through, a gamified void which you pass through at such a speed that victory itself is perilous…a free-fall populated with coins and candy and the chiming terror of convenience.

But perhaps we should have a moment of contemplation here before we start the issue, if anyone reads these things in order. Let us reflect on some failures, some obvious ones and, importantly, projects that failed at their own stated goals.

Let's be sober adventurers on this macabre journey and perhaps we can find ways to burrow beneath and fly above this insidious zombification which touches all who pass on this McCarthyesque Road of desolation. Am I taking things too far or not far enough?

How about police abolition? Oh how quickly the

approved "anarchist" voices evaporated from NPR. Clearly being used, but almost always masochists anyway, these anarchists had a real moment four years ago. Supposedly, if you listened to the prophetic voices of the media apparatus, we were on the edge of a massive change in policing. On the edge of something monumental to cleanse the perverse history of America and reinstall the good conscience of liberal elites.

What we were on the edge of, it turns out, was installing an even more permanent class of asshole police, now armed with their own special class of grievance. Oh what joy have we unleashed! Following through is never a strong suit but invigorating the Leviathan comes easy enough. What was given the police, and what has therefore ended policing under the pretext of law at all (now the constitutionalists practically sound like sovereign citizens), is a therapeutic mandate. That is to say, at once they are both more aggrieved and frustrated while being more sweeping in their charge.

Abolish the Police will ironically be the marker for a new, far more authoritarian, era where the madness of the grievance-led-snowflake becomes liberated for the police to also experience (looking past the FOP long having incubated this grievance politics, but that's for another time). Everyone's absolute equality of viewpoint in the virtual ironically liberates simulations of the state while feeding on the vestiges of power. Cops are reduced to pure force and grievance, whiny little assholes like the rest of us. The cops aren't elites, they are widgets of power. All the body armor (now all the time -- always a catastrophe broods! They should team up with that child-no-more, Greta) is to put a veneer over the nothingness, the utter lack of legitimacy, the degradation of all "legitimate authority" -- now at the point of dust and bone. Here we are with all these materials and a new psychic era of smartphone psychosis. Here we are with the vestiges and artifacts of the state. Here we are to reenact from a point of complete idiocy all the pretenses of power.

These people, and I mean all the cops, from the badged to the petty authoritarian (who's recruitment seems to grow daily much faster than cop enrollment) are plainly insufferable, in fact that is their point. They exist to grind against things, to prove by constant technical friction that they, yes, they themselves, actually exist and matter! So no surprise the police do not vanish and nothing is abolished (in any sense, in this example), rather we have liberated policing to the masses. An internal and intimate proliferation of sub-culturally specific gun-toting mall cops.

So our victories seem in short supply or out of stock but we continue on anyway. Calls for political action, policy... any dead end achievement to give us the illusion of an end, a finality -- collapse itself, as the eternal drama always escaping us, is there more to comfort our meaninglessness than to invigorate our action -- ring as hollow simulations. Hey man, we are making a difference! The difference of a Lego moved from one set to another.

Political nihilism is almost unavoidable, if it weren't for the fact of the system's own nihilism decomposing all value constantly we would almost certainly have to take it up just as a point of antagonism and strategy. But let's not be so naïve. The system has deconstructed everything perfectly well on its own and the tired voices calling for a resurrection of value and ideals seem destined to occupy, ironically, the subcultural space allotted exactly for their emotivist passion. Abolish the Police? Sure, who cares, it doesn't matter anymore.

How about the great inauguration protest legacy or the even more pathetic Bernie Bros who screamed in everyone's ear that this was "the moment" (for what? They didn't know either) and criticism of Sanders displayed ignorance of his positions and a lack of solidarity? So it was that solidarity performed its final disappearing act. Since politics is always lagging behind it is only at the Reality Show stage of dialectics and still uses the tools of cable television to understand itself (this isn't about ratings). Jean Baudrillard briefly hypothesized that Reality TV was so popular because of its stupidity. The viewers took pleasure in "feeling less stupid than the show." A media strategy to "offer shows that are dumber than reality" is certainly appealing but I have to agree with Jean that it gives the imbeciles running TV (or politics) "credit for a lot of imagination." Nevertheless, this hypothesis has new evidence in Biden/Trump/Kennedy – all three are grievance-fueled and empty and most assuredly stupid. Biden, a sort of endpoint of politics in his stammering mumble, his stupidity almost must be intentional. The whispering of the masses coalescing to keep him in office..."look, guys, we're smart-

er than the president!" Trump, a felon, a fallen angel condemned by the center! He's like the guy you wanted to win *The Survivor*! This is what Baudrillard called "radical democracy." All the pretense of qualification is lost and we are left with the "beatification of the man without qualities."

No one on, either side, will believe the "truth" of the election (and they shouldn't, when did radicals get so prude about "election integrity" anyway?) but they will follow around, in Pavlovian fashion, the sweet crisp digital ring of the bell of stupidity. Their own private microtone of discipline. All the talk of "civil war" was precisely at the moment when the hypothesis proved the opposite. There is not "civil war"! There is a dreadful, unending, mournful and obscene civil peace! Everywhere we go customs and morality have faded... but abandoned to no vacuum, simply replaced by the digital and virtual strategies of automatic manners (and the equally bad inversion of those manners, see ANews).

So even after the rioting (will there even be more?) and the opposition and the crying and the pathetic handwringing over every infinitesimal nothingness in policy we still have the prospect of being witness to this further degradation. What a shame. At least this time we really, truly, honestly, faithfully, can avoid bailing out the rioters since the nullity of their simulation of rebellion is just too close to the last one to spin off any illusory effectiveness or sympathy.

Anyway, that's enough for now. There are a lot of ideas in here you may disagree with, and plenty that might make your blood boil and your heart race like you're actually alive. Maybe some of it will bore you. Maybe some of it is an objective failure. Maybe some of it is worthless, useless, fatalistic and despicable -- maybe we're finally doing something right.

Or maybe some tender allusion to peace of mind jumps through the pages and you are left with the humble thought that in some extreme tendency of rejection you are not alone at all, simply lost from one another in an endless refraction of that little death called data.

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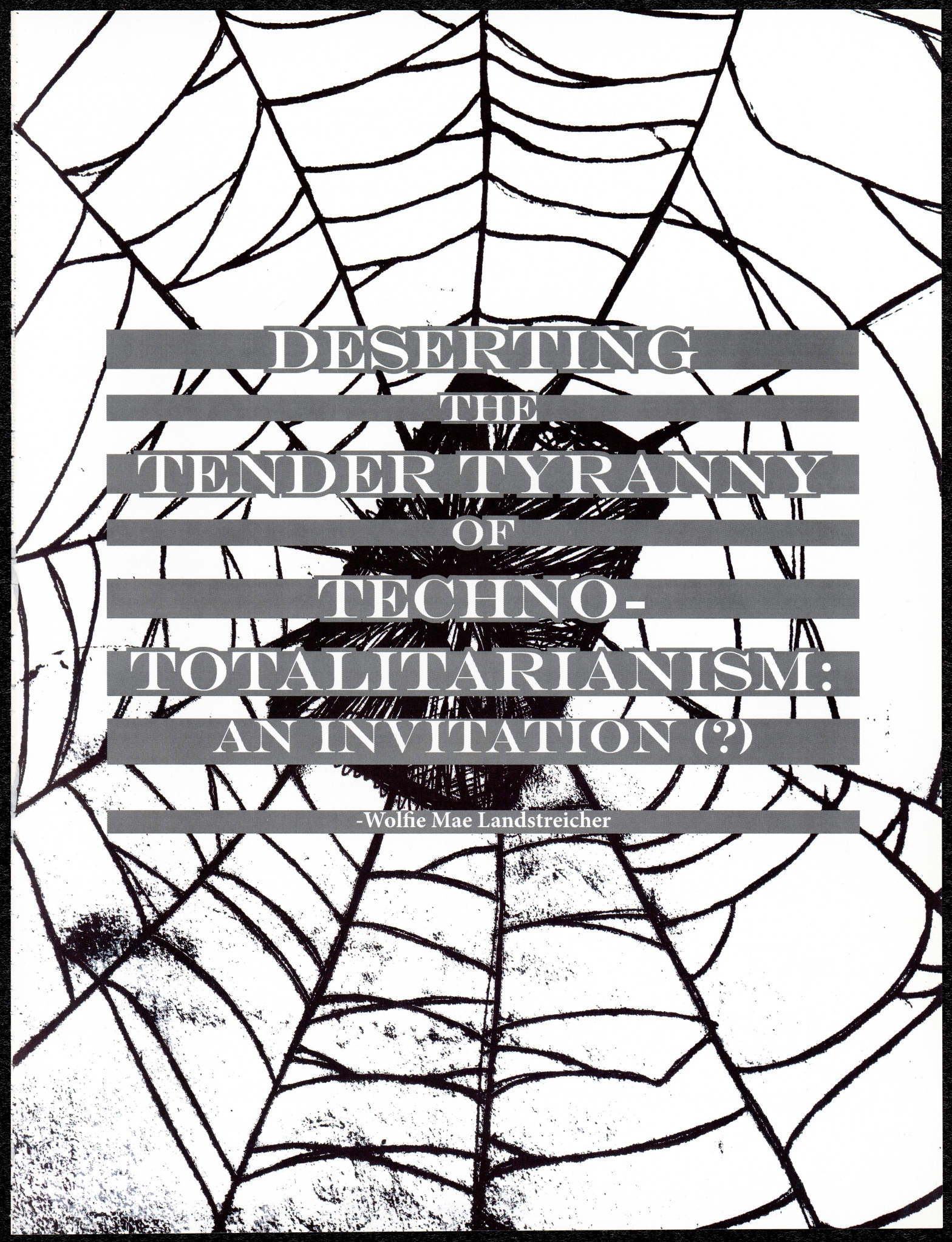
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DESERTING THE TENDER TYRANNY OF TECHNO-TOTALITARIANISM: AN INVITATION (?)

-Wolfie Mae Landstreicher



What if ... ?

What if you found yourself living in a totalitarian world, but it was a tender, tolerant tyranny which allowed you to express nearly anything you might want to express? How would you respond? Would this permitted "freedom of expression" be enough to make you accept your subjugated existence? If you retained any critical awareness in this situation, you would know that such a world could allow this "freedom", because whatever you express, *it would make no difference.* The totalitarian order would provide the channels for communication, and these channels would have no need to censor because they would reduce everything anyone expressed to logorrheic mush ... Ideas reduced not just to opinions, but to mere information, bits of data ("the given"[1]), runny word-turds whirling in the cesspool of the "one lone hypertext" written by the "one sole, collective, multiple, and contradictory author" that Pierre Levy described in *World Philosophie* in the year 2000.[2] Any individual who cherished her autonomy, who valued his uniqueness would feel the urge to desert in the face of this world of tender, tolerant totalitarianism.

The world of laptops and smartphones, the internet and social media, texting and "tweeting" and "tiktoking" is that world. The tender and tolerant techno-totalitarian regime surrounds you and me with its screens, wrapping us in its "world wide web", reducing all who make use of its channels into cogs in the machinery of the production, distribution, consumption and reproduction of information, which is, in the present time, "the commodity which sells all others". This commodity needs no pricetags since the price is your life. Once you have bought in, it takes on the role of a controlling power that suppresses dreams and imagination in favor of "the given" (data), keeping you and everyone else in line, or rather, *on* line, seated reverently before the screen, "mouse" in hand, fingers on the keyboard, ready to be informed ... and *to inform* -- on yourself and everyone else. Those immersed in this techno-world would find it nearly impossible not to fall into the role of informer. It's what the technology is made for: to be a panopticon of surveillance, which has developed to the point that it can reach into nearly every home, every workplace, every playspace in the western world and beyond. It is taken for granted that everyone who is not destitute even has one in their shoulder bag or their pocket. This techno-totalitarian world has been subtly imposed through the manufacture of pseudo-needs and wants, particularly the "need" to be informed. Loathing every imposition, I have intended to desert this world, both so that I can create my life on my own terms and so that I can attack the imposed techno-totalitarian regime with all the ferocity within me. And I have desired to share this project of desertion with a few complicit kindred spirits.

[1] This is the etymological meaning of "data".

[2] Quoted by Annie Le Brun in *Reality Overload,* p. 153.

A Smidgen of Thoroughly Nonobjective History

*" ... fascism is pure democracy... **the dictatorship of democracy** ...the law of the lynch mob ... "*

-- Andre Prudhommeaux (French anarchist) in "What Is Fascism?" (Temoins, #15-16, summer-autumn, 1957)

In the first half of the 20th century, Communists, Fascists, National Socialists and similar groups came to power in various countries with the aim of establishing authoritarian utopian systems in which every moment of daily life in society would be totally controlled. These movements were called totalitarian. They strove to build a collectivist, mob-based democracy that could extinguish individuality, the dangerous random factor that threatens every social order, in a higher social being.

But these authoritarian utopians lacked adequate technologies for controlling the mob democracies they required. Their most advanced technologies were those of direct force and violence, and those who obey under duress are never fully under control. Total control requires *willing* participation from the subjects, *willing* obedience from the slaves. These early totalitarian utopians only managed to establish hellish dystopias where, beneath the surface control, discontent and potential rebel-

lion were constantly simmering.[3] And they had no means for assimilating this discontent.

Around the middle of the 20th century, a new type of technology began to be developed, and a new term was created to describe this technology: cybernetic technology. Broken down etymologically this would be a *system of techniques for controlling or governing*. Those in power were certainly not blind to the potentials of this technology.

Although research into methods of linking computers into networks goes back to the early days of cybernetic research, the origins of the internet trace back to the early 1960s, when the U.S. Department of Defense contracted with various researchers to develop a global system of computer networking. The purpose of this network was to aid the DoD in global counterinsurgency activities and domestic surveillance. In other words, *control.*

It's no surprise that state and corporate interests tend to run hand in hand since (despite "free enterprise" propaganda) many of the same people hold power in both realms. With surveillance and control woven into the technical framework of the internet, it was easy, in the early days of computer networking, to imagine a blatantly dystopian future where "Big Brother Is Watching You" through screens the government has forced you to have in your home. But in this scenario, all of the problems of *involuntary servitude* would still remain. And cyber-capitalist corporations would be stuck with one customer, the state. Instead, the cyber-capitalists of the Silicon Valley and other centers of cyber-tech production have developed computer and internet technology into a seemingly desirable consumer product that people want to bring into their homes ... and even carry in their pockets.

Following the vision of the techno-hippie utopia Richard Brautigan portrayed in his poem "All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace", cyber-capitalists have developed machines that seem to make more and more daily activities "more convenient", or at least more instantaneous: writing and editing; "communicating" with friends, family and work colleagues; shopping; finding and consuming entertainment; access to anything that can be reduced to electronic data. This consumerist development combines the physical shrinkage of the machine (to where you can now access the internet from the phone in your hand or a special pair of eyeglasses) with the expansion of its virtual power. At this point, most homes, schools, workplaces, etc., in the western world have at least one computer connected to the internet, voluntarily. Most people quite willingly carry one in their pocket in the form of an internet-connected cellphone. And this is quickly spreading throughout the whole world.

While developing these marketable consumer aspects of cybernetic/internet technology, the cyber-capitalists have also continued to advance developments in its surveillance and counter-insurgency capabilities (think "algorithms", for example). These particular capabilities are just as useful to corporate capitalists and advertisers, who want to monitor and create trends and fashions and manipulate opinions, so-called needs and wants, as they are to the state. The corporate world also wants a global population that is blissfully under control.

But if the convenience of consuming information is what first draws most people into the internet and the related screen culture, what moves them to become the internet's free voluntary labor force, actively producing information, is its much vaunted inclusiveness, its apparently inherent democracy, found in its many forums for "free expression": blogs, personal websites, social media, twitter, discussion boards, etc. Here anyone can fling out their opinion, reduced to data and easily gathered by anyone who has the desire and means to do so -- including cops of all sorts, government agencies, corporate advertisers and anyone with the desire and skills for manipulating trends and opinions. The democracy of the internet is a mob democracy (not that I have any love for any sort of democracy -- government by the people is still government). In this light, it is no surprise that, in the name of free self-expression, transparency, security, social justice, etc., etc., people flock to have their vacuous say, and so, (mostly unwittingly) confess, snitch, police, judge, condemn, etc. And so without being aware of it, these internet users are acting as the mob democracy so necessary to any totalitarian system: everyone carrying out acts of surveillance, counter-insurgency, policing, etc., against themselves and each other.

[3] This was true even in Nazi Germany, despite what some of us in the U.S. learned in our history classes. It's worth looking into the history of the Edelweiss Pirates, for example.

Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union required state control of the radio to create the overload of information -- some true, some false, much of it sheer absurdity -- that would undermine the critical thinking in most listeners and create a situation where words lost all meaning. A French anarchist poet, Armand Robin, spent years listening to and analyzing stalinist radio and referred to this result as "false speech". He concluded that the technological form of public radio was an ideal forum for "false speech". In his words (my translation): " ... many, many people understood clearly that the new device, originally intended to say something, transmits babbling in which there is only silence ... Untiringly, day and night, the device hurls a gigantic chaos of information at the brain. Now it can be said that nothing is ever said and that what is said is never anything: the event no longer exists; the listener finds himself facing a universal absence that is truly new; ... everything happens as if a silence that is not even heard was extending bit by bit over every land, disguised day and night as a proud uproar, without a single second of interruption."[4] The internet has taken what Robin saw in radio more than 80 years ago to levels that I doubt he could have imagined. So now the state can leave the task of information production to the voluntary conscripts of the internet's mob democracy whose ceaseless overload of cyberspace with meaningless words has created what Annie Le Brun calls "*A totalitarian system of inconsistency* ... capable of casting doubt on even the memories of this historic time. In this system, not only is everything the equivalent of everything else, but also nothing exists unless it is everything's equivalent, and vice versa."[5] What Annie Le Brun describes here is the actuality behind the techno-totalitarian utopian doctrine embraced by so many cybernauts and transhumanists: the Singularity, that vast global hive-mind to which they aspire.

Like the totalitarian utopian doctrines of the Fascists, Communists, National Socialists and their ilk, the Singularity is unlikely to ever be fully actualized. It is a *faith*, not a fact. But because the internet is so proficient at transforming all speech into false speech in Armand's sense, it has been able to remain tolerant and inclusive in how it controls, manipulates and directs the mob democracy it creates. This has allowed it to go much further toward total social control than the early 20th century movements could have imagined: with *willing* subjects, *willing* conscripts, *willing* slaves, keeping the production lines of meaningless information flowing.

Because the designers of the internet have woven its "world wide web" more and more into the fabric of everyday life in mainstream culture, it can appear to be all-encompassing, inescapable. But for those who want no part in mainstream culture, this may point to a way out. In the ruling cyberculture, "inside" is online: it is being "connected". So how do I find the outside? By turning off the screen, unplugging from the web ... by deserting the tolerant totalitarianism of the internet.

Toward and Unplugged Counterculture of Epicurian Laziness, Free Play, Poetic Beauty and Rebellion: A Call for Desertion

" ... let no one ask me to acknowledge anything in this world. Here, I am looking only for traces of life that have not been tamed. There are others who still share this passion. As for those who do not possess it -- and as for whatever these people claim to represent -- it is through every means possible that I intend to tell them no, no, no, no, no, no, no."

-- Annie Le Brun

I am an outsider in this world: untimely, anti-social, unwilling -- and perhaps, by now, unable -- to conform to its demands. In my own tiny ("petty") way, I've been a bit of an outlaw. And I am a thoroughly "wrong-thinking" (self-thinking) heretic. So I have no desire to live in a world full of cops and snitches, inquisitors and witch-hunters, kangaroo courts and mob democracy (which has always been the enemy of every outsider, every nonconformist, every self-thinking heretic). And as a willful self-creator, hostile to every form of slavery, I have no desire to live in a world designed to make everything I do there work for the master, producing, spreading and tak-

[4] From my working translation of Armand Robin's *La fausse parole*, which I have entitled *False Speech*, to emphasize that it is referring to a falseness imposed on the use of language as such. I don't know when this translation will be ready to share.

[5] Annie Le Brun, *The Reality Overload (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2008), p. 75.*

ing into myself the very thing that feeds its power. The internet, the world of glowing screens, is that world. And though it felt like I was dragged in kicking and screaming, I did get caught up in its web.

I've been cutting myself out as best I can with the intent of deserting. I could do it myself (anyone could; it's a matter of making some choices), but it is quite tricky. The way the internet has been woven into the fabric of everyday life has even created dependencies that relate to survival. I have always fought fiercely against letting *survival* control how I live. I have found that when willful self-creators associate, joining the strengths of our fierce individualities together in a spirit of mutuality and defiance against conformity and obedience, we can often surpass the limits of survival. And so I wrote this as an invitation to anyone who might feel moved to join me in a dance that weaves together our refusals and desertions, our dreams and desires into what I like to call an unplugged counterculture of epicurian laziness, free play, poetic beauty and untamable rebellion.

I use counterculture here to refer to a way of relating and of interweaving creative endeavors that will counteract the cultural tendency to petrify such endeavors into custom, ritual, habit, rule or data. It's a matter of living a creative and shared nonconformity, a fluid, improvised dance of indomitable individualities, endlessly mutating mutually, and a wildly playful rebellion. Embryonically, such an offline, unplugged counterculture already exists.

First of all, there are those who have intentionally remained unplugged, the invisibles of the cybernetic era. Some are my friends and correspondents. They are individuals who play artistically, poetically, rebelliously, and who gladly share their endeavors with those who figure out how to get in touch with them.

Then there are those who are experimenting with ways of creating their lives that will lower and perhaps ultimately end their dependence on the industrial system. This would ultimately lead them to desert the internet and could give them a stronger place from which to attack industrial-cybernetic society, if they so choose. I see this as another area for exploring complicity and mutuality against the technological world.

Then there are those like me. By choice, I never built a large online presence, and in recent years I have drastically reduced it. More importantly, I have been (re)gathering tools and learning skills that make it possible for me to carry out most of my solo creative endeavors without relying on the internet or even, to an increasing extent, on the screen. This has vastly increased my enjoyment in these endeavors. So, as I said, I could unplug and desert from the internet alone, but I'm not content with merely ridding my life of one of the many miseries that this world imposes. I want the joy that comes in sharing the creation of different way of living, interweaving desertions and rebellions with accomplices and kindred spirits.

As recently as twenty-five years ago, very few of the anarchists I knew had computers. Only one or two had access to the internet. Anarchist life was not at all an online existence. That means that about half of my time as an anarchist and most of my life completely outside of the computerized, online world. I had the pleasurable adventure of discovering new ideas in books and publications, taking part in deep and stimulating discussions through correspondence and face-to-face conversations, and traveling to meet other anarchists and play rebellious games. The absence of computers in anarchist worlds was not a lack in any way (in fact, it held a wealth that has diminished to a point of near-nonexistence). The slower ways of communicating at a distance gave time for reflection, a practice that seems to have nearly disappeared these days. I bring this up (like some old codger yapping about "the good old days", I know ...) simply because remembering how recently the online world was imposed upon your and my daily lives might make this desertion seem less daunting. And memory can play a significant part in sparking the imagination for experimenting with creating life outside of what has been imposed.

In this essay, I am expressing a desire. I can't reduce this desire to a scheme, a blueprint, a program. Desire is never mere data to process. It is an impulse to act, to create, to destroy what gets in its way. The language I have for expressing this desire is poetic, a language of dreams, and to those used to being told what to do (and the tendency of computer programs to issue commands to the users is something I have long noticed), such language may seem too abstract. I make no apologies, because these are not my playmates, my accomplices, in pursuing



this endeavor. It is an adventure for active dreamers willing to disrupt themselves and the world that has been imposed on them. In a short essay entitled "Irregularity: Between Analysis and Desire", Black Mamba says, "To disrupt ourselves and the world in which we feel like strangers, we need a desertion that allows us to abandon ourselves to something totally different, to make a clean sweep of this consensus reality, sowing doubt." For me, this desertion includes a desertion of the internet, because online nothing is ever even slightly different in any meaningful way; it is always the "one lone hypertext" where "nothing exists unless it is everything's equivalent". This is why I seek my playmates, my accomplices, my kindred spirits, among the refusers, the deserters, and the anguished active dreamers striving to break away. Let's start talking, *off line*, about how our projects and endeavors, our experiments and adventures might interweave in practical ways that could enhance each of our lives and rebellions. Let's start exploring ways for weaving our refusals and desertions, our adventures and dreams, our desires and our beautifully ephemeral selves into a wild, chaotic dance of mutual enjoyment, an insurgent and fiercely individualistic counterculture that expresses the rising up of each genuinely *singular* individual against **THE SINGULARITY**, that techno-totalitarian nightmare that the ruling order strives to impose on us.

April 2018 (slightly revised)

Afterword

I first wrote this essay more than six years ago, and much has gone on to reveal just how *willingly* servile nearly everyone is before the ruling techno-totalitarian order. And this "nearly everyone" includes most so-called anti-civilization anarchists. The response to the whole spectacle of the Covid-19 pandemic was a prime example of this willing obedience ... And the willingness of some anarchists (particularly in the United States) to actually act as *enforcers* of masking and vaccinations has been perhaps the most shameful moment of willingly succumbing to authority that I have witnessed in my five decades as an anarchist. But this is simply a *symptom* of the general tendency to acquiesce to what the ruling order has imposed that seems nearly universal. In light of this reality, the birth of "an unplugged counterculture of epicurian laziness, free play, poetic beauty and untamable rebellion" in any significant way seems increasingly unlikely. But, for this very reason, I feel that it is utterly necessary for those of us who genuinely want to rid ourselves of the techno-totalitarian tyranny and the entire civilization of which it is the latest incarnation to find ways to play in this direction.

I am quite aware of the things that, over these past six years, have prevented me from unplugging completely, and I recognize the irony of typing this into a computer to email it to the editors of *Oak Journal*. But I am no moralist (an amoralist, actually ...) and recognize that the actual unplugging aspect of this is a *process*. And much of the play and beauty in moving away from the technology world lies in exploring other ways of creating the lives you and I desire: developing more deeply sensuous ties with the wild world; finding ways to share ideas, feelings, desires, etc., not only without the screen, but even without the page, so that we are sharing not only words and images, but our full moving, dancing, smelling, touching, breathing, spirited bodies.

It is true that unplugging and moving toward more embodied ways of relating will mean that our words, our ideas, our dreams will not get thrown before the whole world. But I have never been one for "casting pearls before swine"; I much prefer the intimacy of a more selective sharing, a sharing in which there is a level of genuine caring for each other.

So I still very much desire to find playmates to explore the sort of desertion and countercultural explorations I wrote about in this essay, and I am still determined to find ways to live out my last days outside of the techno-totalitarian world and its tender tyranny. To have playmates with whom to dance out these explorations would be marvelous. But if necessary, I will find a way to do it myself, embrac*ing the beauty of solitude. So if I disappear into the woods, don't be surprised ...*

Wolfi Mae Landstreicher

May 2024

I've heard

in this new world
We are all orphans
Not without parents

but with parents, we can no longer turn to
Mothers and Fathers, who are wise

but have forgotten their own parents' wisdom

Condemned as irrelevant, it dissolves

I felt shackled

My own flourishing arrested

and put behind bars
It was let out- but
Inside it had been plucked

And scrubbed with soap until it was red and raw
So I took my own hand and fled

to the canyons

In caves with misfits

Other self-proclaimed orphans
We boiled our water
drank it sweet with teas
We named new gods

Cut our palms

let blood drip into the earth

trampled it into the dirt

We made new deals

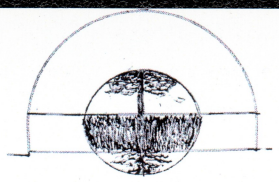
promised

We, would not raise orphans
We would not be lonely children's living kin

But, we didn't quite believe it all
Uneasy
Our parents had been here before
We saw their names, still as lovers,

carved into the red rock walls

-raye schmalstig



...but there must be no rivers, birds, or trees either

by Sascha Engel

Against my will, I recently moved and now live downtown, above a mall, in a minor Western European city. I can see one solitary tree from my apartment window, and a few shrubs growing through the cracks here and there. So as often as the necessities of bourgeois existence allow - currently (one must quantify these things) on average 1.57 times a day - I visit a group of trees by the riverbank. The group dwells not far from where I live; as the crow flies, it might just be a few hundred meters. But these few hundred meters are carved out by four roads, one of which is a major passageway to another city; several more or less dilapidated apartment blocks; a four-floor parking garage (€9 all day, limited time only); a hospital; the city's loudest night club; and a police station. First, I have to cross all four roads and a bridge to get to an asphalt bike path following the river. Then, after walking down that path for about five minutes, I can see the trees. The riverbank here is fortified with concrete; "weeds" are being removed on an ongoing basis; a fence hems in the trees; discarded plastic piles up around their roots; asphalt cuts through what used to be their soil. And of course there used to be many more of them.

That this group still there is just as deliberate as the fact that the others are gone. Preserving the trees I visit reinforces urbanity just as much as the asphalt does that traps them. Cityscape "is now the universal state of the earth, all that is not yet receiving the city can become and will become unless reserved as exception, which only further accents the grin of hegemony." [0] Asphalt is everywhere. It "connects points of civilization… The beaver trapped in the compartmentalized wetlands of my suburban greyscape identify the roads as prison walls." [1] Likewise, the trees in my urban greyscape are trapped, and I along with them. After standing by the trees, watching them, being with them, I invariably have to leave and go back to the roads, to bourgeois liberty, to quiet grief. Invariably, as I face the trees, I long to rip up the asphalt and

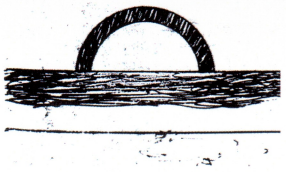
Thus also, and by way of a postscript to my article in the previous issue of Oak - the multitudes we erroneously call 'trees' live in a different temporality than domesticated man. They are not 'living memory', as though their years are brought into the present, as though their shape in space is their path through time. They are this only from the perspective of time, the vantage point of The Present, the calculus of storage and economy, of protention and retention. There is not a sapling in a past Present, followed by a tree in a present Present or future Present. Nor is there dead wood coexisting with a new sprout in the present Present. All this only seems to me so because I live within time, because I'm domesticated to see a tree in the present Present, remember a sapling in the past Present, anticipate a tree in the future Present. Viewed as undomesticated beings, so-called trees are rather the simultaneity of two movements - bringing the past into the present and future, sure, but also

make way once more for their grove to return, for the worms and insects, shrubs and hedges, mosses and lichens, birds and bats to come back. For the riverbank to re-tangle. For the bike track to become a path once more, and then for the path to be overgrown in turn.

But invariably I realize that merely ripping open the asphalt, even if it meant a permanent return to the path, and even if the path were then overgrown, would not be enough. For the asphalt trapping trees on one side, the river on the other, is not only the latest iteration of the previous path, but this path in turn is the iteration of another, and this of another, and so forth, backwards in time to when humans first set foot here. It's neither merely the asphalt, nor merely the path that must be contested, but the gestures that created both in the first place. The roads that I cross, too, and the hospital looming over me, the police station, parking garage, night club, reiterate previous buildings and structures. It's not merely the night club and police station, but the underlying urbanity that must be challenged. The gestures these structures prescribe for me and everyone else passing them iterate previous prescriptions for previous gestures. It's not my quiet grief, but the docility from which it stems, my urban being, that must be detonated.

The urbanity I implement when visiting the trees and attempting to find wilderness among them is the same urbanity that built the roads around them in the first place. Underneath all else, the ultimate stake is to contest a world where "the meaninglessness we sense underneath objectively-defined slaughter" may well be "a cliff which cannot even deliver us to a state of nature" because "nature itself has been subjected to disintegration into a series of legible immanent illuminations." [2] Ripping up the asphalt in the name of the path, blowing up the police station in the name of anarchism, evicting the night club in the name of nature, gluing ourselves to the road in the name of river, bird, and tree, cannot return to a state of nature or move forward to any state. In approaching the trees as trees, the river as river, and the birds as birds, I do the same thing that the asphalt does, and as the path did before bringing the future and present into the past, and simultaneously manifesting all three within each other, such that none of them crystallize into The Present. Their past is not a present that has been, nor their future a present that will be; rather, all three simultaneously unfold through each other. So-called trees do not exist in The Present, nor do they persist through time. The past tree is and is not and is not not the present or the future tree, just as the future tree is and is not and is not not the present or the past tree, all at once but none as present. The linear language of Latin notation fails here, and this is likely why, implemented as trees, they seem silent. Read them simultaneously, though, and their continuous unfolding - their writing themselves against time, and teaching us how - becomes clear.





it. I divide and conquer, assign 'nature' here and 'city' there, as though 'nature' wasn't a projection of 'city', as though tree, river, and bird weren't thereby implemented as mere antitheses to building, asphalt, and path. I disentangle and classify, I disintegrate and illuminate: I render legible. My quiet grief never ends, and the trees appear mute, because I implement them as trees, because I obediently iterate the gestures the asphalt prescribes. Tearing up the asphalt doesn't remove the path because I am the path: I implement the separation of river, tree, and bird; I write them and myself among them, I reinforce the bike track as I long for its disappearance, and by doing so.

Undoing asphalt, buildings, and roads is thus also unwriting trees, rivers, and birds. Blowing up the city requires blowing up nature, too. Untaming wilderness requires unwriting myself, too. As the asphalt is ripped up, it is not the tree or the river or the bird that returns but their undifferentiation, their continuously unfolding uniqueness. As they unfold uniquely and continuously, my domesticated personhood can vanish, and I too return to "the type of creature I am, kin to the fishes, deer, skinks, crows, whales, and all the others who are so close to me that we are like siblings." [3]

Perhaps along these lines.

Writing continuously, "river" must be destroyed, and in such destruction it becomes ⊂ vaporous dispersal, ⊂ weighing,  seabass, and  plant-atmosphere. As ⊂ vaporous dispersal, "river" Writing continuously, "tree" must be destroyed, and in such destruction it becomes ⊏⊐ hedge, ryegrass, and  fawn. As ⊏⊐ hedge, the destruction of "tree" becomes the principle of bio-dispersal rather than being a single entity. It is water-mineral-soil-root-stem-leaves-sunlight, as well as worm-mycelia-root-bark, and seedling-fruit-wind-soil-root, myriad chains of unfolding gestures. But it is especially bush-undergrowth-roots-rain, as principle of sprawling life beyond the confines of what's commonly understood to be "a tree"; water

is self-limitation (rather than static limit) amid breaking-through self-limitation; indeed its limit is posited in and through breaking through its self-limitation, and is the former only for those who classify it through the discrete concept. For above all, "river" is dissolution at four sides, and is on each side dissolution at first into a return-to-itself, such that each side is at first an infinity, a circuit endlessly returning to itself, but is this again in and as dissolution of the returning, not as a return to position or a negation of negation, but rather as completion of continuousness, as fading into endlessly losing itself.

Discretely, that is, "river" is limited by air, riverbed, banks and source (both fountain and ocean or lake or another river). But continuously, each of these is rather a return-to-river as a circuit morphing through various stages, not stages as in states of aggregation, but gradual becomings and dissolutions forming an enlarged circuitous whole, a seemingly self-affirming infinity of gradations and self-connections. - As air, "river" is constant vaporous exchange of moisture, becoming-mist and, in terms of plant logic, becoming-fog, dissolving into vagueness of density, gradually receding but also swaying and getting denser again through wind and into cloud (if indeed there are such things), flying ultimately in the sky and mixing with dust particles to form raindrops that fall back through sky into discrete "river," completing the circuit where "river" never quite flowing in from the roots moving through adhesion to leaf cells, by osmosis, before evaporating into the air to form vapor and clouds raining down again. And within these cycles of gestures, "tree" dissolved encompasses numerous other continuous lives, bacteria and flies and worms and birds liberated from their dissolving concepts, other trees and bushes and shrubs and grasses and mushrooms freed from theirs, and animals feeding on grass and leaves and living in dewdrops and spiderwebs, freed from theirs. Such continuousness is contained even in vulgar concepts like "photosynthesis": properly read, it becomes a gestural chain, sunlight-leaf-sugar-mycelium-bacteria. Or continuous speech dissolving the boundary of "tree": hormones and pigments bridging distances through communication; root systems intertwined; entire forests just single individuals or clones of one another; 'crown shyness' patterns. Within the continuous destruction of "tree", ⌐¬ hedge implements it first and foremost as an integrated, ever-shifting assembly space or focal point of overlapping gestural chains, as above; and even the mechanistic simplicity of "biological science" has now of realized this, however dimly; institutions, of course, cannot.

With ⇃⇃ ryegrass, too, we have growth in multiples, never alone, just as in ⌐¬ hedge. Here, however, we add perennialism: a longevity never towering, never assertive, but humbly surviving eon after eon, impervious to time both by putting up too much and too little resistance to it. Likewise, we have soil and root conservation through root system dispersal,



ceased and air never quite began. And this is complemented by another circuit moving in the opposite direction, for air is also within discrete "river" too, and thus both inhabit each other, the movement of vaporizing their mutual limit being the same that posits, supposedly, their discreteness. - Likewise, riverbed is in truth the exchange of water and soil, release of the latter into the former and drawing of the former into the latter, but also sedimentation of the former into the latter and nourishing of the latter into the former. These too are exchanges that are not so much traversing an existing limit as they are constituting supposedly discrete riverbed and supposedly discrete river, which are therefore effects of their traversal rather than preceding it, as neither can exist without the other. This also manifests in animal-exchanges, where soil, water, and air diffuse into and out of animal life, and animal life completes their circuitous infinity within its own existence. Unlike air, the return-to-itself of "river" through soil is thus not in various stages, but immediate; like air, it is constant and continuous. - That the banks of a discrete "river" don't actually limit it at all is of course widely known and self-evident, and "river's" return-to-itself is evident even discretely, as floods recede and tides ebb, and as groundwater, nourished by discrete river, is really always a deposit that returns to discrete "river." This however also interlocks with the circuit of air, as rain and tide and flood are united in shaping banks and reshaping them in and through their return; once again the limitation of river is a self-limitation in and through breaching the limit - the breach precedes the limit - at all sides and returning to itself from the breach. - Finally, source and destination (ocean, ultimately, or other rivers, lakes, etc) are seemingly the most discrete of "river's" limits, and the hardest to breach, but these too are actually forming "river" as an infinite circuit in its very discrete form. For discrete "river" is classified as part of a general circuit even in the atrophied vision of "ecology"; a circuit of rain-rocks-source-river-ocean-vapor-cloud-rain-rocks-source-river-ocean-vapor-… Even in the discrete view this is an infinite return-to-itself; adding strength to it without hardening it to life, resisting cool and heat alike, springing back up after scorching sun when the rain-animal hears its pleas... Thus here we have

as temporalization what  hedge is as spatialization: tree-before-tree, tree-beyond-tree, tree-after-tree, never "a tree" but continuous unfolding after continuous unfolding, so incompletely mechanized by the concept of "ecosystem", a living beyond itself in eternal entanglement, gestural assembly as gestural dispersal and gestural dispersal as gestural assembly.

Finally,  fawn indicates that there is no such thing as a sedentary "tree". Rather, "tree" dissolves as it is mobile beyond itself. Seen continuously, what looks like immobility from a discrete perspective is actually what allows the destruction of "tree" in this respect as well: its unfolding in and through the mobility of animals, who thereby become its carriers (seeds in fur, ants in burrows), or its inhabitants (birds in nests, spiders in webs, moths in leaves), or



written continuously, it becomes an infinite return-to-itself of each of these through all others at all times, with the movement through all others preceding their self-limitation as each stage becomes all stages of the circuit, and loses its discrete identity with very little deviation from the discrete view of "ecology."

But these returns-to-itself are not ultimately self-affirmations of discrete "river," nor indeed affirmative returns at all. Their positing of "river's" limitations is not primary, and the limits are therefore self-limitations, but are rather merely a side-effect exploited by discrete classification and all the "urban planning" and "landscaping" that follows from it. For these four circuits forming  vaporous dispersal are infinities not in the sense of regaining themselves - reconstituting their own conceptual integrity - in an endless transfer of ontological commitment where each lapses back into stable being as an other of discrete "river." Rather, the true and complete dissolution of "river" as  vaporous dispersal, as becoming-fog, through air is the dissolution of wind, cloud, sky, and rain. Only if these are posited as discrete entities does "river" return to itself through them. But they too are dissolved by the movement constituting them as it dissolves "river," and  vaporous dissolution therefore means an infinity of loss, or "river" receding into the undifferentiation of continuous unfolding of all elements of the circuit at once and yet of none at all; the infinity of its dispersal never reaching the point where any of them are constituted - except by the fiat of discrete classification. The same applies to the dissolution of "river" through riverbed, which is in turn constituted by the dissolution also of minerals, soil, animal life, and where "river's" limitation is thus neither posited discretely against riverbed, nor affirmed as a return-to-itself through animal and mineral exchange, but is again an infinity of loss, where river and riverbed are distinct and are not distinct and are not not-distinct, their limit and exchange take place and its devourers and thus rebirthers, hiding or playing or dying in them and their undergrowth, giving birth to young of their own, smaller, shorter life cycles alongside the longevity and stillness of  ryegrass.

Thus  fawn is the combination of the previous dissolutions, and if a bird is born in the nest of "a tree" in Europe and flies to the equator, then its flight is the completion of the destruction of "tree", for its birth-nest is with it there, and mixes with new beings in savannah and desert, and new waters over the ocean, and new  hedges and  ryegrasses, and  fawns.

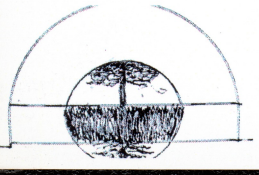
do not take place and do not not-take place; soil, too, is becoming-fog and nothing else. Through banks, infinite loss is implemented as plant- and animal-beings as ground-, tide-, and floodwaters spatializing "river", becoming indifferent to its river-form, and implementing its dispersal in organisms dissolving in turn. And source and destination, too, are as undifferentiations of oceans and rocks there, not there, and not not-there, becoming fog.

What was once discrete "river" has thus, through  vaporous dispersal, receded into undifferentiation from continuous unfolding, and is itself in and through all unfoldings, as self-limitation positing return-to-itself out of infinite loss-of-itself. Between the latter two, the dissolution of "river's" infinite circuits is modulated by  weighing, which is here a continuum (rather than a continuousness) of ways of contouring encounters as "river's" circuitous returns-to-itself become dissolutions of other supposedly discrete entities. As "river" constitutes/dissolves riverbank, for example, this movement manifests as caressing of rocks and pebbles, but also as dislocation - a physical  weighing through

And of course  weighing also has more consequential forms. For just as its dissolving movement is also a weighing-down of rocks it contours, so the implementation of "river's" dissolution is both a providing and a withdrawing for plant and animal beings, and both groundwater and flood for any of those who dwell by discrete "river." As "river" dissolves, therefore, its return-to-itself loses itself and never returns-to-itself, and in this it  weighs and finds wanting the striations it encounters, and sustains and destroys as its infinity of loss sees fit. Through being beyond discrete "river," its present absence becomes drought and its absent presence becomes flood, and in both, "river" is not not-there.

As  seabass, discrete "river's" dissolution is

Writing continuously, "bird" must be destroyed, and in such destruction it becomes  oat,  plant-speed,  cudweed, and  goat's beard. Neither individual movement of wings, nor individual trajectory or destination,  plant-speed dissolves "bird" into an aneconomic dispersal, infinity of infinities losing themselves; affirming ground without solidifying it to territory because it is affirmed in and through air, and affirming air without solidifying it to indifference because it is affirmed in and through ground. Thus  plant-speed manifests, as it destroys "bird," as ground dissolving by becoming a density differential to air, quantitatively but not qualitatively different from the density differential

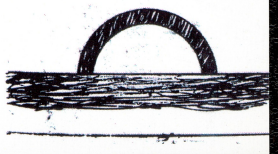


redistribution and patterning, endlessly dissolved/constituted, and thus infinite loss of "riverbank": there can be no such thing, only constantly shifting deictic constellations of rocks and plants and animals (each of which is a self-limitation posited by its dissolution, this infinity of infinities). It's not just humans who never step into the same river twice, there is also never the same riverbank twice, and indeed there is no riverbank at all, nor a river; both are infinities gained from infinite loss through  weighing within  becoming-fog.

that of the animal beings exchanging soil, water, and air, within discrete "river" and riverbed's constellations. As each of them destroy their self-limitations in their own way, the continuous unfolding of "river's" recession through them likewise happens as return-to-itself receding into infinite loss, and each creature is manifestation of "river" losing itself infinitely, and dispersing itself continuously beyond itself. For each creature in its own uniqueness destroys itself and destroys "river" as part of its not being there and not-not being there, both within "river's" discrete limit (as fish, crab), and beyond its discrete limit (as otter, bird). As "river" moves through each creature as  weighing, so each creature moves through "river" as  seabass, and combined, they modulate and implement  vaporous dispersal.

between cold and hot air whereby the discrete "bird" soars and falls, and thus merely another part of flight, speed, movement, another implementation of air; and as air dissolving by becoming a familiar but treacherous differential to ground, quantitatively but not qualitatively different to the worm in the ground, the branch growing from the ground, and dust *merging* soil with discrete air. In the former dissolution, ground loses all its supposed material stability and becomes an endless series of pressure differentials, inscribed into them not as a solid state of aggregation, but as a ripple of differences - "solid soil" becomes a special case of the dust storm, where the ground is in the air, and of fog, where air is in the ground - which then becomes a movement *of infinite loss* where ground and air are undifferentiating continuousness.

Finally, as  plant-atmosphere, the movements by which "river" dissolves into return-to-itself and For this, too, does not render ground a kind of air, as the obverse is simultaneously also implemented through  plant-speed when dissolving "bird." In this latter dissolution, air loses its ethereal indifference, and



infinite loss are movements that offer aneconomic hospitality - nourishing and withholding - and thus allow dwelling to occur: as murmur and portent, as tales of fading into wind and multiplicity of trajectories, depths, and distances; as dream fragmentations and return into fish and fowl; as hiding and resting; as balm for what might discretely perhaps be a soul (if indeed there is such a thing); each through all in its own receding into continuous unfolding: flumina fluunt.

becomes a return-to-ground, manifest as claws and beak under the discrete ground to grab worms - ground moving into "bird" - as branch grounding nest to start and end discrete trajectories, and as treacherous ripple effect filling air with ground, in storms and clouds as well as hot and cold atmosphere rising up from surfaces and depths. Air is thus also the undifferentiating continuousness of ground, like ground is that of air, and both more through  plant-speed, their truth an endless loss of both in and through the other implemented by the not being there and not not-being there of "bird." As  cudweed and  goat's beard, each of the undifferentiations unleashing each other in and through the dissolution of "bird" manifest as a multiplicity; not merely in the taxonomic sense of more than one species (although this is the discrete manifestation of their self-limitation, when subjected to classifying), but as dispersals that percede unity. cudweed is thus a dissolution of "bird" in clusters of shape-shifting reshuffling, fleeting appearances of density and form dissolving into myriad unique movements and reforming in soft proximity, strings unfurling like wool; density differentials projecting ground into the air as "birds" form clustered quasi-entities, and projecting air into the ground as they cascade back out of formation. Thus reinforcing plant-speed, cudweed also implements the morphing of "bird" into soil as seed, distributed and planted and bestowed; loss of "bird" as it becomes earth and water and tree and bramble; longevity of tree as loss of "bird" in death that indefinitely ripples outward into eternity of life harbored within tree; and stationary existence again as loss of "bird" in flight that ripples outward indefinitely through what is discretely called the butterfly effect. As goat's beard, in turn, "bird" dissolves into water, connecting the undifferentiation of ground and air to the circuits of infinite loss inhering



in the dissolutions of "river" and "tree" and moss and lichen. Forming clumps again as shapeshifting reshuffling, this affirmation of water brings it into air and returns "bird's" destruction to the movement hosting it.

As ⅂/ oat, finally, the undifferentiating continuousness of ground and air destroying "bird" becomes giving of nutrient, riches of soil and aneconomic hospitality of their offering. In its hanging floret, "bird" is there as seedgiver, grounding itself as nest; it is not there as soaring indifference, flight beyond field; and it is not not-there as each collapses into the other endlessly.

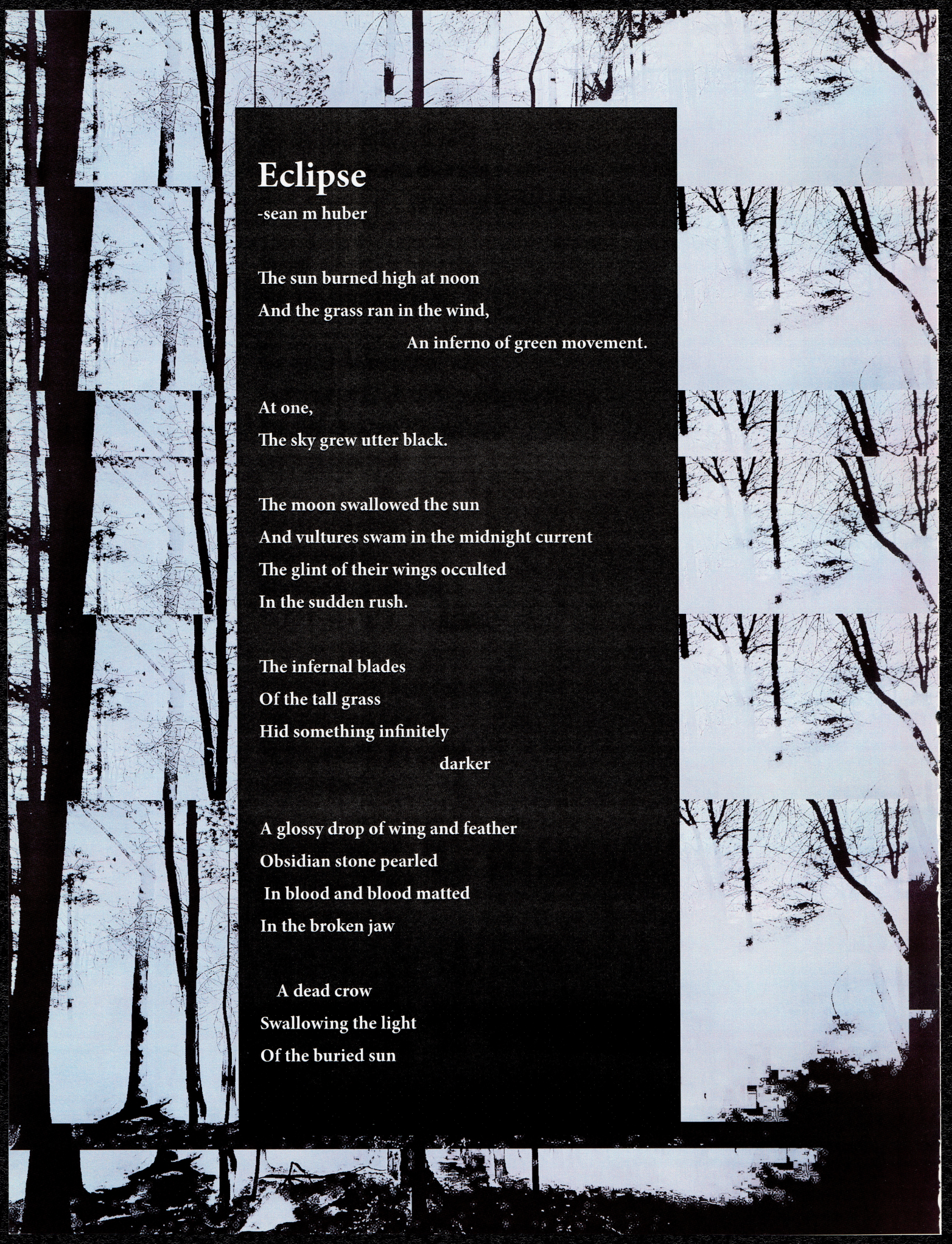
[0] Steve Kirk, "The City is Everywhere," in Plastic in Utero, Issue 2.

[1] Abrum Ahul, "Paths, or, how the vines consumed my identity," in Plastic in Utero, Issue 2.

[2] Voice of Failure, Intensity and Meaninglessness, 9.

[3] Walks With Knives, "The Sixth Sun Rises," in Plastic in Utero, Issue 2.





Eclipse

-sean m huber

The sun burned high at noon
And the grass ran in the wind,
                An inferno of green movement.

At one,
The sky grew utter black.

The moon swallowed the sun
And vultures swam in the midnight current
The glint of their wings occulted
In the sudden rush.

The infernal blades
Of the tall grass
Hid something infinitely
                darker

A glossy drop of wing and feather
Obsidian stone pearled
In blood and blood matted
In the broken jaw

A dead crow
Swallowing the light
Of the buried sun

AGAINST RELEVANCE

-Ocean

Let us criticize the notion of "relevance," for its shadow contains a hidden lever with which we might leverage a through-the-lookingglass flight from the Behemoth.

"Is it *relevant*?" We ask this question when judging an offering's worth. But what are we really supporting when we set something on the scale against relevance? Relevant = pertinent, "having direct bearing on the matter at hand." More generally the term is used to refer to pertinence toward the present politic, toward the social demands of the time. Asking about something's relevance is asking: can it be integrated into our vision? Is it colonizable? Is it recuperable? —No matter how benign we perceive our purpose, when we seize something and subjugate it to our assessment machine, we colonize. If instead we truly refuse to see things as things, and strive to see things as beings, this must include not just beavers and stones and watersheds, but also ideologies, relations, dreams. To reduce such beings to the measure of their usefulness is a heinous perversion of their autonomy and unknowable beingness.

Re-levant: *levant*, from the proto-Indo-European "legwh," meaning "light," as in: not heavy, of little weight. In the sense that *relevant information* helps to "lighten the load" of the matter at hand. But we do not need our load lightened. Quite the opposite. What we need now is *more burden*. We need a great, crushing burden, enough heaviness on the shoulders to drag us to the Earth, close to that dark lifegranting humus, where our weeping might water the seeds there buried. And even further: let the burdens of a fearless witnessing, of an anticivilizational anguish, push us down into that chill, nurturing womb of the Earth, that realm of nonconscious wisdom, of concealment and rebirthing, of Hades' dark riches. Yes, we reject this lightening. We crave a weight that has been denied us.

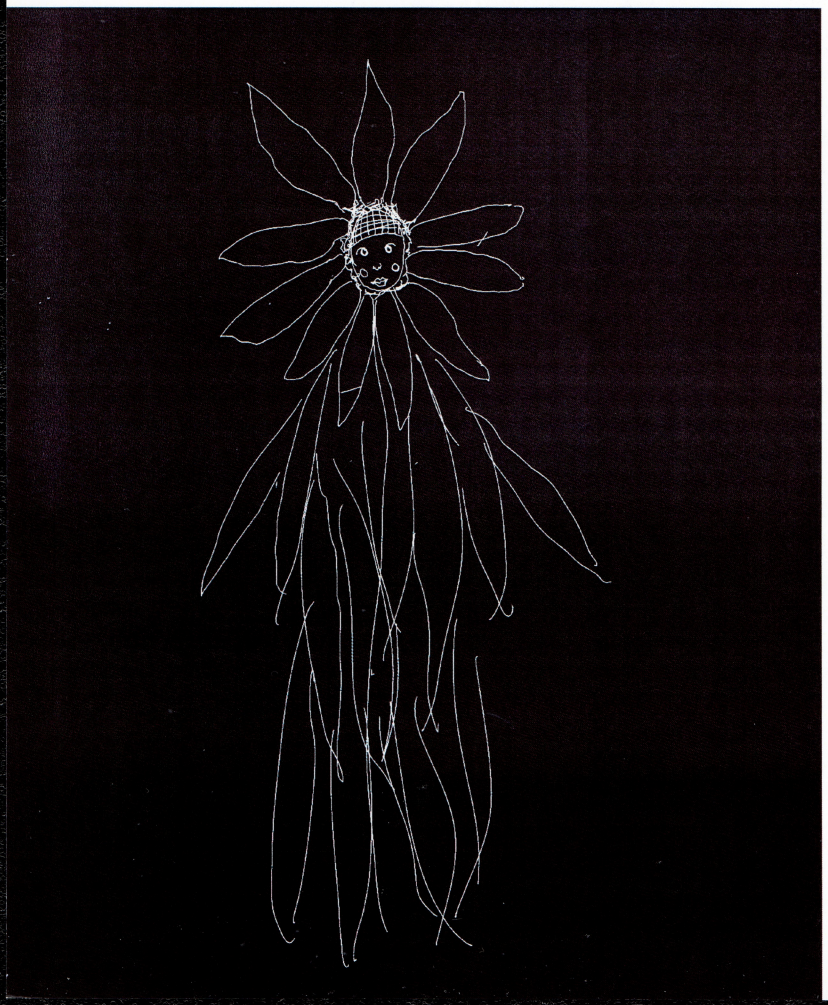
The *weltanschauung* of "relevance" is one of *cultural* applicability: applicability to the concerns of the culture writ large. But our age is not one toward which we wish to forge ourselves applicable; our age is one of dissociative alienation, of capitalist reduction of the soul, of a ruthless extractive bent and insidious disempowerment, inanimist disembodiment and dream-discounting scientism. This society is a dream of gold coins, a suffocation in the unreachable. We reject the dream of this society. We choose a suffusion in soil rather than in coin. Against coin and crown we wave the flag of irrelevance, of the irrational, the nonsensical. We leap beyond castle wall and cultivated field, out into that rich jungle of possibility. Like wild animals we go. To where the outlands of the imagination again become the middle. We remove ourselves from applicability and withdraw from relation with that which poisons the soil and therefore the soul. We turn to embrace a relationality toward burden and tears and the shadow which the sun draws forth from us, extending across that great plain in which lies buried Abel and all the sons and daughters of Cain. Sink us into such shadow! Away from the Zeitgeist, the ghost or spirit of the times. We do not wish to be formed into something applicable to this ghost; instead we pivot ourselves toward an alternate ghost, that of unmediated being, still haunting the sea of images, haunting the miniscule rather than the landscape, immediately present to us once we discard the scales with a brusque flourish of the arm. We fall to our knees in irrelevance, beseeching the blessing of such a *geist*. "What nonsense! A waste of time!" accuses the Behemoth, its voice policing us from within our own skulls. *Yes!* we bellow in celebration. We praise nonsense, we burn our time in flames of laughter. We go arm in arm with absurdity and eschew projects that are of any spirit but the spirit of pure revelatory expenditure. The value lens of modernity distorts our wild, pack-borne, plenitudinous origins, hissing in our ear that there is not enough for us, calling our endeavor mean-



WE PRAISE NONSENSE, WE BURN OUR TIME IN FLAMES OF LAUGHTER.

ingless—to which we gasp a resounding *YES*. In affirmation of our freedom we paddle out into the shimmering waves grasping oars of meaninglessness.

Relevance fits itself to something pre-existing, the clean edge of the rectilinear structures of modern anti-relational knowledge. Let us not fit. Let us resist fitting. With a glint of madness in the eye let us shape ourselves to something older, the uneven edges of leaf and shore, the unpredictable changeabilities of sisterhood and brotherhood. Let us entrust ourselves to something of a magnitude unmeasured by the scales which weigh gold against sweat. We trust in an echo, an echo resonating off the burning cliff walls in our chests, an echo of something entrusted to our animal roots. And these roots bury themselves in a soil that is no static *ground* but rather a shifting, tectonic, seasonal adaptability, a remembrance which requires our trust in our own capability once we become nonreferential to that society which once defined our every choice. When we become nonapplicable to the drives of the machine-writ-large, the ground shifts, and our ear attunes to distant shores against whose seawalls resound this echo. We believe again in the unbelievable, and remembering our roots, we weep.



Such attempts at irrelevance are sure to continue to find themselves recuperated by the monetization apparatus. Even this brief essay, this language, wrenches itself away from its spellcasting roots and degenerates toward a placement of value, recuperating itself as its words are written. In response we model ourselves after the transformative powers of our mythic ancestors: donning cloaks of wings or scales we evade and remake ourselves into animals of a hundred thousand faces, and bounded only by our imaginations we embark on countless permutations of creation and camaraderie. On hoof and talon and pincer we embark. We reduce in scale to that of the microbe, the electron, smaller even than chemicals can confound. We whirl in unreachabilities. We unfurl into irrelevance, phasing out of synch from the hammering strikes of the Behemoth. We share. We repair our relations. We delight in wasting time again, in a reclaimed hospitality toward creation. We set ourselves before the nonhuman world as though before a blooming grave. Into the dark goes our gaze, and our attention gleams with a phosphorescent glistering in the eyes. With all the passion left to us we devote ourselves to the unrelenting creation of unuseful beauty.

These words themselves the sinuous windings of the sidewinder; let them, too, slip into senselessness. A flash of patterned scales— and we disappear into the jungle at creation's unbounded center.

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HOW PHILOSOPHY FAILS

A Brief Guide to Top Dogs in Modern Western Philosophy

by John Zerzan

Theodor Adorno opens his magnum opus *Negative Dialectics* (1966) with "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed." Thus, he goes on to say, philosophy is "obliged ruthlessly to criticize itself."

Not only has it misfired, but its failure and irrelevance has only worsened over the years, with scant exceptions. Its tedious abstraction means the standard philosophy college survey course easily wins the "most boring" prize.

Cumhaill and Wiseman's *Metaphysical Animals* (2022) tells us about post-World War II women philosophers at Oxford, and points out that the "greats" of European philosophy have all been men, and nearly all of them bachelors. They isolated themselves from women and children, so largely from life, love, and loss.

The separation of philosophy from the larger culture goes along with an increasing separation of philosophers from other philosophers. In 1962 Yehoshua Bar-Hillel judged that "communication between philosophers has been deteriorating during the last decades."

Originally the word meant "love of wisdom," referring to knowledge in general. Very early on, the senses were ruled out in favor of the cerebral alone. In the past century or two specialization has set in with a vengeance, producing mostly abstruse intellectual puzzles of interest only to professionals.

Meanwhile a new malaise of civilization is the zeitgeist, with news outlets fueling a fast-spreading catastrophic outlook. End times prevail, with new depths of psychological suffering. Technology has triumphed, leaving us feeling lonely and abandoned.

The current period of widespread indifference to politics has seen the end of "every emancipatory adventure," according to Elizabeth Rondinesco in 2005.

I'd like to back up here, to the 19th century, to take a look at how philosophy's idols (some of them, anyway) helped bring us to today. Deflate them a bit, bring them down to earth, starting with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) proclaimed a "life is suffering" doctrine, close to the outlook of Buddhism. In *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) he saw irrational, unrelenting will as bedeviling the individual, denying personal fulfillment. He was one of a handful of philosophers who addressed suffering, but only in terms of a quasi-religious gesture, quite removed from historical or social reality.

Referred to as the Great Pessimist, he became far less pessimistic when he acquired prestige quite late in life, as a kind of overnight sensation. His was perhaps not as serious a philosophy as he projected, but Schopenhauer had a major influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

According to Nietzsche, a philosopher should be "a terrible explosive from which nothing is safe." To many, he was a radical iconoclast, the anti-Christ, his Zarathustra alter ego proclaiming the ubermensch/overman hurling prophetic thunderbolts. Gilles Deleuze judged that "modern philosophy has largely lived off Nietzsche, but not perhaps in the way he would have wished."

In fact, the image of a peripatetic wild man misses the mark entirely. He wandered, having abandoned his philology professorship early on, but his outlook was conventional at base, at least until he approached a psychotic break at the age of 45.

He rejected antisemitism and German nationalism, boosting Felix Mendelssohn as his favorite composer, and aspiring to the status of "good European." He would resemble a modern liberal, but for the fact that he was wholly against democracy.

Nietzsche did not deliver a systematic philosophy His outlook was anti-metaphysical, and beginning with *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), more of an aesthetic one. His contrast of Dionysian and Apollonian impulses in the arts was meant to revitalize Western civilization, not to combat it. His attention to the dynamics of individual ethics qualify Nietzsche as more of a psychologist than a philosopher. He advocated a more instinctual approach to life, decrying the tame and civilized status of the herd. But at times he undercut this anti-domestication sentiment by urging the subject to transcend his animal nature.

For Nietzsche freedom is the will to power; however, he quite clearly rejected the idea of power as power over others. He meant self-mastery; again, the psychologist, the ethicist. Robert Solomon's essay, "A More Severe Morality: Nietzsche's Affirmative Ethics" explores this ably.



His crowning conception was eternal recurrence or *amor fati*, love of fate: the unreserved embrace and recurrence of all that was and is without change. Conservative conformism on a philosophic level, as I see it.

Nietzsche died in 1900, after a decade of madness following his 1889 breakdown in Turin. Another unsystematic thinker, Henri Bergson, was beginning to emerge into prominence in the years before World War I. He was by far the most well-known philosopher in the interwar years. Since World War II, unlike Nietzsche, he has been forgotten.

Bergson stressed experience and intuition over mediation and abstraction; he wrote of duration as lived time. His vitalist outlook fit the pre-World War I zeitgeist of energy and challenge. Nikos Kazantzakis was Bergson's student; his *Zorba the Greek* expresses some of that spirit. Bergson's major works include *Time and Free Will* and the very popular *Creative Evolution*.

Coinciding with the heyday of Bergsonism was the arrival of the "linguistic turn," the major philosophical development of the 20th century. This movement is variously called analytic philosophy, logical positivism, and the Vienna Circle, the last a reference to its proponents. For these philosophers, all philosophical questions are questions of language.

Outspoken philosopher Marjorie Grene trashed this as a move to the "more and more trivial, more and more divorced from anything...you can tell when philosophers start talking. There's no connection with reality." Bruce Wilshire put it this way: "Analytic philosophy tends powerfully to put us at a remove from everything, even from our own selves, selves turned ghostly."

With the likes of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, the modern analytic shift was based on logic, specifically mathematical logic, the most formal kind. Thus meaning somehow resides in what is ever more formally abstract, aiming at an utmost precision of language, a purely formal analysis.

Looking for the austere logical skeleton within language is immeasurably remote from actual reality and its challenges. Language is not bodily. It is the missing person. Analytic philosophy is thin and desiccated to the highest degree. Wittgenstein, considered the most brilliant of the analytic practitioners, ended up seeing the folly of the search for the inner meaning of language. His early *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* pursued the party line, but he reversed course with *Philosophical Investigations* (published posthumously in 1953). He came to the conclusion that the secret of language is a false quest, that the many uses of ordinary language ("language games," as he called them) work just fine.

Edmund Husserl founded phenomenology at the beginning of the 20th century. He tried to establish a rigorous analysis of consciousness in order to get directly "to the things themselves," free of preconceptions. Although he failed to reach this goal, Husserl's brand of theory of knowledge was an influence in many spheres of thought throughout the century. His aim--an unmediated, beyond-the-conceptual connection with "things themselves"--beckons, but cannot be obtained through abstraction. (Which is, after all the hallmark of philosophy.)

Husserl was the mentor of Martin Heidegger, who as the rector of the University of Freiburg banned him from the campus when the Nazis came to power in 1933. (Husserl was retired but had continued to use the university library for his research.)

To many in the philosophy playpen, Heidegger was the most influential thinker of the 20th century. He focused on what it means to be: Dasein, or being in the world, with his declarative *Being and Time* (1927). He asserted that it is possible "to think being" in separation from beings, a Heideggerian version of existentialism.

Against our "fallenness," our "forgetfulness of Being" (we've been on the wrong path since Plato), Heidegger situates thinking on a deep ontological level. But it's so much bunkum that links up to nothing. He even attests that all human inquiry is circular. His rhetoric sounds profound and goes nowhere. Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* nails it: jargon, not authenticity.

His one actual insight he quickly rendered inconsequential. He saw that technology devours and deforms everything, even thought itself. So he recommended a new Be-ing--but one that would leave technology alone! In 1955 he said, "We can use technical devices and yet with proper use we also keep ourselves free of them." (!!) This quietism is a total copout, and I think he knew better. "Only a God could save us," he declared in a 1966 *Der Spiegel* interview.

With *The Technological Society* (1964), Jacques Ellul demonstrated how profoundly determinative and autonomous technology is. He succeeded where Heidegger dropped the ball. Kaczynski's "Unabomber Manifesto" (*Industrial Society and its Future*) is largely a summary of Ellul's book, rendered in more down-to-earth prose.

There are those who find Heidegger's thought emi-

nently separable from his identification with Nazism, a deplorable ethical lapse by his partisans. Recent scholarship has made this position even less defensible. Beginning in 2014 his *Black Notebooks*, covering entries between 1931 and 1969, have been published. Notebooks can consist of undeveloped ephemera, but Heidegger considered the Notebooks his crowning achievement, containing his definitive judgments. As convincingly documented in Richard Wolin's *Heidegger in Ruins* (2022), the Notebooks display the depth of his antisemitism, commitment to Nazi ideology, and their connection to his overall philosophy. It's an extremely ugly and irredeemable collection, reflecting almost forty years of bile and bigotry.

Gilbert Ryle, along with A.J. Ayer, Rudolf Carnap, and of course Wittgenstein, was a mainstay of the logical positivist/analytic school. Ryle summed up Heidegger in earthy terms: "He was a shit from the heels up, and a shit from the heels up can't do good philosophy."

Martin Heidegger claimed throughout his career that he was a phenomenologist, no matter how distant his thought was from "the things themselves." His empty ontology was in no way bodily, for instance.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, was indeed a phenomenologist, the century's most prominent. Certainly influenced by Heidegger, his emphasis was on perception, consciousness, embodiment. He was a co-editor, with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, of *Les Temps Modernes*. This collaboration, and further philosophical exploration, were cut short by Merleau-Ponty's death at age 53.

Sartre was an acclaimed dramatist (e.g. *No Exit*), and novelist; *Nausea* was one of the major novels of the 20th century. His Being and Nothingness (1943), proposing that human being is a nothingness that must constitute itself, is a long introduction to a philosophy of freedom. The Nazi occupation forced the question of freedom on Sartre; it was the ground from which existentialism emerged in the postwar West, especially in France.

Sartre's partner Simone de Beauvoir was strongly influenced by Engels' *The Origins of the Family: Private Property and the State*. She saw in women a "new proletariat," and wrote early feminist classics, notably *The Second Sex* (1949).

Sartre was a famous partisan of the Left, opposing French colonialism in Algeria and French and American imperialism in Vietnam. In *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, he tried to reconcile existentialism and marxism. Despite his cornerstone Rousseauvian emphasis on existential freedom, he joined the French Communist party and praised the regimes of Stalin and Mao Tse-Tung.

Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse were co-members of the radical Frankfurt School. Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) borrowed a leaf from Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, as to the ever-greater instinctual renunciations at the heart of civilization. They give a different spin to the scene in Homer's Odyssey in which Odysseus and his crew are tempted by the Sirens: "Come ashore and party with us!" His response is to have himself tied to the mast, his crew's ears blocked with wax. To Homer the Sirens threatened death. To Adorno they represented eros and freedom, an interruption to the voyage to repression/civilization.

Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) tried (unsuccessfully, I think) to rescue civilization via a middle-ground perspective. Against Freud's conclusion that repression is the very nature of civilization, he argued that if we could remove excess or "surplus" repression from civilization all would be fine. Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) despaired of the possibility that people could revolt. With what he termed repressive desublimation, the subject has become too deeply enslaved. "The Sixties" began to explode globally within months of the publication of *One-Dimensional Man*. Teaching in California, Marcuse joined the movement. His star pupil, Angela Davis, turned out to be a marxist-leninist, sadly enough. Somewhat like the case of Jurgen Habermas, Adorno's graduate student, a committed proponent of civilization and enlightenment; not a failed, fatal experiment, Habermas claims, but one in need of completion or fulfillment. (!!)

Neo-Freudian Jacques Lacan had-- and still has, in the case of leftist Slavoj Zizek--an influence on philosophy. His most memorable line reminds us of the continuing dominance of the "linguistic turn": "The Unconscious is structured like a language."

Postmodernism enters the picture in the 1960s with figures like Jacques Derrida, who also enlisted under the "linguistic turn" banner. And who famously proclaimed, "There is nothing outside the text." Nothing inside it either, when one applies his deconstruction approach that undermines stable meaning, ultimately reducing text to incoherence when it is shaken or stirred enough. Derrida renounced categories like transparency, presence, origin. Now that Artificial Intelligence can produce the text and the other symbolic products, where does that leave deconstruction?



Jean-François Lyotard was another postmodernist. Like Derrida, he opposed metanarrative, the desire to grasp an overview or the whole. "Let us wage war on totality," he urged, for the will to totalize is a totalitarian impulse. This was aimed at marxism, but extended to create its own anti-totality totality, a generalized dictum that rules out understanding.

Among those in the postmodern dark in France I must award the prize for most removed from reality to Jean Baudrillard, beloved by the art school-type crowd in the '80s and '90s. In his early work, such as *The Mirror of Production* (1975), he cogently analyzed marxism as embracing productionism as fervently as does capitalism. But he soon declared that reality is no longer moored to reference points; under the sign of simulation modernity has become hyperreal; all is simulation. In *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995) Baudrillard took this view to a new level, asserting that images of the U.S. war on Iraq were more real than any actual "war." It has been said that from being a big science fiction aficionado he graduated to writing sci-fi himself. One quote he did get right: "We live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning."

All is simulation according to Baudrillard. Hyperreality. All has slipped the bounds of outmoded notions that tied the actual to origins or points of reference. So hypercivilization has nothing to do with domestication, which by the way, is the core dynamic of civilization qua civilization. Very fitting for the "high priest of postmodernism," as Baudrillard has been called.

In many ways postmodernism was a debilitating impulse, a surrender in thinking. Alan Sokal, a physics professor at New York University, published "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" in a 1996 issue of *Social Text*, a "cultural studies" journal. Sokal purported to apply a postmodern approach to particle physics; the article was a complete hoax, as he admitted. A parody, employing trendy pomo rhetoric, without substance. But leading postmodernists fought back, defending the indefensible, just as there were those who defended Baudrillard's insistence that the Gulf War didn't really happen.

Strongly influenced by his contemporaries Foucault and Sartre, Gilles Deleuze focused on how philosophy comes about. He first received acclaim in academic circles for his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962). Deleuze became involved in what is called the philosophy of sense; in *The Logic of Sense* (1969) he resisted philosophy's "linguistic turn." It was at this point that he came to fully embrace his materialist and naturalistic leanings. In those years he began his collaboration with activist psychiatrist Felix Guattari. Deleuze's major work, *Difference and Repetition,* mirrors, however abstractly, the difference he sought, and the repetition and inertia that blocked liberation from the State and the Communist party.

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) are the two volumes of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Foucault's take was that these works examine Western society's "innate herd instinct" and question what is normalcy. But their complicated and obscure "body without organs" concept seems to me unnecessarily central to either capitalism or schizophrenia. And their reliance on the "rhizome" metaphor, describing a lattice-like surface as means of development, is clearly related to postmodern rejection of depth and origins.

The Left in Europe declined markedly in the 1970s. Its last significant theorist was the structural marxist Louis Althusser, who strangled his wife in 1980 and was declared insane. His *For Marx* (1962) and *Reading Capital* (with co-authors, 1965) are forgotten today, even as embarrassing communists like Alain Badiou and Slavoj Zizek soldier on.

Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) introduced an important concept as to the nature of modern society. Ignored by the mainstream until the 1990s as too radical, Debord, in turn, ignored the centrality of technology.

There were no important postmodern thinkers after the 1990s. In America, philosophy has mainly slumbered in the shallows of pragmatism, from William James down through John Dewey and more recently, Richard Rorty. Its thin reformism barely veils its utter conformism.

Another branch of contemporary philosophy includes ethicists such as Emmanuel Levinas, Martha Nussbaum, and Peter Singer. I think their overall failure stems from ignoring social institutions, while claiming to decide how to approach questions of right and wrong.

A third sector is philosophy of mind, still haunted by machine metaphors despite the overwhelming negative reality of technology. Thomas Nagel's *What Is it Like to be a Bat?* (1974) is a banal if well-known offering from this field.

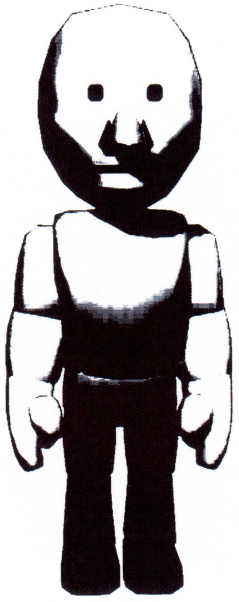
Philosophy: for all that life has been up against, hardly a success story.

THE CONTROLLED OPPOSITION OF NPC COMRADES

-Jason Rodgers

To deal with complex & uncertain situations, people often adopt predetermined social roles that allow them to avoid making their own decisions. These roles provide a simplified sense of meaning; illusions that help them get through the meaninglessness of their daily lives. Anarchists are no different. They can choose from a great variety of character classes, each of which provides them a set of predetermined attributes. This might be a membership organization, but these days it is just as likely something much more free floating, such as CrimethInc. Often these sorts of roles are just as constraining.

CrimethInc is one of the most prominent of anarchist projects. It is a loose collective of folks who release media and texts within a sort of think tank format. They originated in the DIY punk scene of the 1990s, coming to prominence through a series of short texts and sharp graphic design work. This graphic design work was often exhibited in the form of stickers that they would ship out in bulk. An example of this was the ubiquitous "This Phone is Tapped" sticker that could be found affixed to pay phones around the country in the early 2000s, following the roll out of the Patriot Act. As time has passed the group has become more and more problematic, functioning as a hegemonic force over certain segments of the anarchist subculture. They are a good representative example of numerous problems of our digital age. I will look at them as such, though I consider them more of a symptom than a cause.

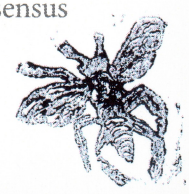


In Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed issue 53 (spring/summer 2002) "An anonymous CrimetInc. ex-worker" had a letter printed which they would likely rather was now forgotten. This is because it gave away their game, explained the way in which they function. The letter was a response to a review written by Wolfi Landstreicher of their book Days of War, Nights of Love, an attempt to explain "tactics when it's not clear to your comrades what you are trying to do" (80). Wolfi's review had been highly critical of the book in many regards, most importantly for lacking a concept of class conflict and being very historically inaccurate.

They started the letter attempting to diffuse any potential conflict, stating that they "agree with all of your essential points in the review" (80). Which of course makes one wonder why they even published the book, let alone wrote a letter in response? There was an element of flattery, as if saying no need for further critique, you're too smart to be fooled, but you are not the target of the trick. They employed a telling justification for the book: "when we make 'anarchist propaganda,' our chief concern is not whether what we say is 'true' in some 'objective' sense, but rather with what the effects of saying it are. This is partly due to our lack of faith in Truth as an ideal (or possibility), but chiefly stems from our desire to make something happen" (80).

There is plenty to unpack here. Start with "This is partly due to our lack of faith in Truth as an ideal (or possibility)" (80). This line engaged in a sleight of hand technique, which like stage magic employs the tactic of misdirection. The question at hand was not the ontological status of Truth with a capital T. It was the question of whether the statements that they had made were inaccurate or false. There is no need to have objective truth as a binary to falsehoods. Perception and reality could be entirely subjective, as to truth, and some statements could still be false. There can easily be a multitude of truths, but this doesn't mean that a falsehood becomes one of these multitudes.

In Paul Watzlawick's book How Real is Real? he proposed that reality could be partially divided into first-order and second-order reality. Watzlawick defined "first-order reality" as "those aspects which are accessible to perceptual consensus



and especially to experimental, repeatable and verifiable proof (or refutation)" (Watzlawick 141). There are great limitations to this order, as "This domain of reality, however, says nothing about the meaning and value of its contents" (141). These concepts about what things mean are the second-order. This could be further problematized through concepts such as perceptual grids, model agnosticism, and inter-subjectivity. Each person may see their reality through unique subjectivities or perspectives. Empirical facts can seem very different depending on whether we attempt to look at them as isolated components or as a holistic process. Reality can be punctuated in vastly different ways, leading to seemingly contradictory conclusions. These seemingly contradictory conclusions might not be mutually exclusive, they might both be correct. Existence is extremely complex. None of these concepts make falsehoods correct though. Attempting to manipulate elements of the first order to justify your preferred second order is often simply called a lie.

CrimethInc engaged in a vulgarization of social construction or critical theory, falling into a crude caricature of postmodernism. This was an early recuperation of subjectivity along the lines of our contemporary "alternative facts". Rather than make things more complex, they simplified things. Rather than undermine authority, they made themselves an authority.

Later in the letter they doubled down, explaining their purposefully inaccurate histories as a "good natured satire of our own arguments regarding history and myth" (81). They attempted to claim they were using a rather sophisticated literary technique (the unreliable narrator) when called out, while happily playing the role of authoritative voice for those without the necessary level of critical reading skill. Considering how subtle they apparently were in using this technique, since no one else seemed to have noticed they were using it, this likely meant the majority of readers saw them as attempting an authoritative voice.

This vulgarization of theory might not be as problematic, if not for what had proceeded it: "when we make 'anarchist propaganda,' our chief concern is not whether what we say is 'true' in some 'objective' sense, but rather with what the effects of saying it are" (80). In this focus on "the effects of saying it", they engaged in political propaganda, one which foreshadowed the dystopian digital politics of the 21st century. The anonymous comrade argued that it is justified to spread falsehoods, if the falsehoods cause someone to do something that the propagandist approves of. This moved beyond the use of rhetorical style or poetic language, it was a manipulative strategy.

The problems of these sorts of tactics were not as clear or obvious is 2002. In our weaponized social media landscape, they become more obvious. Structurally these tactics are similar to those employed by folks like Alex Jones, Order of the 9 Angles, or Libs of Tik Tok. Messages are tailor made to get the recipient to act out in some sort of way. The goals are obviously different, which of course does matter. Libs of Tik Tok engage in stochastic terrorism, while CrimethInc engages primarily in stochastic shoplifting or stochastic vandalism. But just because we might like the ends more, does not mean we should engage in these means.

I fully think that these tactics are similar to those used by far right groups now, but it could be argued that I am purposefully choosing examples that would be particularly problematic to left anarchists. Of course I am, as particularly harsh examples. I purposefully chose particularly distasteful examples. But I suppose I should tone things down a little, and give an example that would be less problematic, for illustrative purposes. There are structural similarities between the perspective CrimethInc revealed in this letter and those of The Satanic Temple (TST). TST are a troll activist group, which do things like attempt to erect statues of Baphomet at government sites that display Christian monuments. They generally exaggerate the influence they have over courses of events, in order to get more media coverage. They routinely make legally dubious claims in order to try to provoke their followers to engage in the actions they want them to. For instance, when some states attempted to restrict abortion, they made the claim that abortion was one of their religious rituals, giving the impression to their followers that they would be legally protected if they had an abortion. This isn't actually true. Religious protections don't actually function like this. The goal was to try to provoke someone to follow through so they could use the legal fight in the aftermath to garner more media coverage. CrimethInc, likewise, spreads messages with the goal of making people act out in ways that aggrandize their project.

I wouldn't want to give the impression that I am some sort of logical positivist or hardline empiricist. I share the critique of objective truth. But for me this makes me more skeptical, less inclined to be sure of truth claims, including my own. I try to always

problematize things and attempt to look at how a different subjectivity might view whatever subject I'm writing about. This also doesn't mean I want people to write in a totally measured tame way. Far from it. I love when writers use performative voices in their work, take on a character, or purposefully exaggerated a point of view. I might be more sympathetic to CrimethInc if they did this more, or used a more interesting performative voice. But there is no artistry to their mask. Hell, it isn't even a mask, more like a good guy badge.

Or I'll even go further, I love literary hoaxes. However, CrimethInc never rose to that level. I love a writer like Charles Fort, who attempted to convince you of all sorts of wild theories, systematically building them up, only to reveal they are false, then deconstructing them. Or someone like Peter Lamborn Wilson, who would sometimes write false documents. One of my favorite examples of this was "Visit Port Watson", a fictional tale designed to seem like a travel guide for a secret anarchist country hidden on the island micro-nation of Sonsorol. This story originally appeared in the Semiotext(e) SF anthology. Wilson claimed that it had been sent to him anonymously. He wrote it as a fantasy of a hedonistic zero-work enclave (the name Watson came from Bob Black's concept of Watsonian Anarchy, the more lunatic fringe predecessor to post-left anarchy). The story functioned as a means of opening up imaginal horizons in the reader. It was seductive in a way that made you suspend your disbelief. CrimethInc, on the other hand, could only open up horizons on a very small scale, usually for alienated teenagers. Many truly wonderful folks went through a CrimethInc phase when they were little, but they all grew out of it, usually while still very young.

They wrote "This wasn't a book for the Wolfi Landstreichers of our community" (80), but promised they would write such a book some day. They were not ready to write that book yet because they "felt it a higher priority to make a book for the ones who wouldn't relate to that unwritten book, so we won't have to do without them in this struggle" (80). They further elaborated "how our comrades respond to this project is not nearly as important as how others respond to it" (80). This book was put out as a recruitment effort, in order to draw more people in to their dumpster burning, black bloc, funny car actions. This had parallels to attempts by social anarchists to recruit the masses, in my view. I don't think we need these sectarian recruitment efforts.

I think of Bob Black's essay "The Call of the Wild(e)", in which he brutalized the ideology of Michael Kolhoff, an organizational anarcho-syndicalist who is now only remembered as the target of Black's criticism. Kolhoff advocated for the formation of a centralized anarchist organization, in order to better reach normal people. CrimethInc didn't advocate for such an organization, but did attempt to employ Days of War, Nights of Love as an ideologically centralizing point. They got to be the authoritative voice, but didn't have to run an organization. In both cases you find an entity advocating for a simplified, dumbed down version of anarchism, in order to better serve as a recruitment ploy. Black posed these rhetorical questions in response to Kolhoff:

> "So who's responsible for him even asking the questions? A chance encounter, a history course, a sermon at a punk show, it might be anything. Probably though it's one of the countless mini-publications of the marginals milieu which Joe is welcome to query, of course, for further details. Indeed, how did Kolhoff become an anarchist and why isn't that a good way for others to get into it?" (Black 191)

This point was lost on CrimethInc (even though I believe they once plagiarized this very essay by Black). They thought they needed to talk down to their readership, give them a simplified version of anarchist theory. They did so as part of a recruitment drive, an attempt to become an anarchist generative nexus. Kolhoff's organizational model attempted to do the same. Both had the idea that they could become a force to be reckoned with, if they got some canon fodder. There was also an assumption with both groups that lay readers would be unable to understand the ideas without this simplification. I might be a cynic and an elitist, but apparently I have a little more faith in the general population than they do. Reading comprehension might be low for many people, but it is no higher in the anarchist subculture. There is no reason not to assume that a certain amount of random readers might find something interesting in your theory or polemic. It might even be easier to raise points of contention among them, rather than among anarchists and radicals, who already have their ideas solidified.

This does bring up important issues of how to get your ideas to people outside of an insular subculture. In this sense CrimethInc may have done worse than many. It wasn't actually designed to reach a general audience; it was designed to convert a punk and/



or alternative audience. I can just imagine the head honcho of CrimethInc fantasizing about becoming Pol Pot to all of the audience at Lollapalooza, leading them like a horde or an army of the night, oogle trainhoppers moving from political summit to political summit. This was a huge demographic in the late 90s/early 2000s, when the book was being written.

The question remains of how to reach outside of an insular subculture. The simplest answer is to put your ideas into spaces where folks outside of that subculture are. I've put thousands of flyers up on telephone poles. Crowbar would leave stacks of Popular Reality all over the areas she lived in, sometimes literally in the streets. The collective behind Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed used to drive along country back roads, throwing copies of their paper on people's lawn (just like the newspaper man). Ideas can be explored through creative writing, like novels. This might be garbage when someone tries to write an anarchist Atlas Shrugged, but when an author is actually talented and creative it can work very well. Tom Robbins and Bruce Sterling are both brilliant writers who have introduced anarchist ideas, without rigid ideology, to countless people. How many people have read Robbins or Sterling? A lot more than have read CrimethInc, that's for sure.

In 2002, CrimethInc fashioned themselves as a gnarly punk rock conspiracy, where as now they seem to fashion themselves as more of a slick think tank. Their website contains a variety of articles which gives what they consider the proper anarchist position on a wide variety of issues and current events. These are never problematized, nor do they acknowledge anything resembling a paradox. Instead, they are streamlined and smooth. If the reader is of the proper demographic, they now have all of the answers they need. They have received their programming. Gerry Reith once claimed he was told in a dream "In Xandu, to be an individual one must be a clone" (Reith 68). It was like a prophecy of CrimethInc. CrimethInc was then, and is now, an NPC factory.

NPC is a term from role-playing games. It is an acronym for Non-Player Character. These are characters that are controlled by the gamemaster rather than a player. Generally speaking they are not entirely fleshed out, more role than character. This was particularly true in the video/computer game version of role-playing games. The player would encounter an NPC and interact with them, in order to progress the narrative. Often, if the player had a conversation with an NPC, a drop down box would appear, providing a number of options for the conversation. The NPC had a set number of pre-programmed responses, from which there was no deviation. What they say might come in different orders, but it was always the same selections. I have found this an appropriate metaphor for many modern political actors.

We find this tendency heavily in CrimethInc. In early years this took the form of emulating the oogle/traveler kid/anarcho-bum archetype displayed in the anonymous book Evasion. A CrimethInc kid would survive by squatting, running petty scams, and dumpster diving, They would move from point to point by hitch-hiking and riding the rail. They would also maintain the necessary illusion that their vandalism would ultimately culminate in a revolution. Now these are fine enough activities, but the delusion and self-seriousness could sometimes sour the fun and potential of these activities (kinda like lemon juice in the dumpstered soy milk). Also, for what it is worth, there is an argument that CrimethInc jumped on this as a pre-existing trend, which in the past the much more fun & interesting Scam zine was often blamed for. (For instance, in an interview, William Wimsatt told Iggy Scam/Erika Lyle that they "helped start this whole Scam lifestyle-- hopping trains, stealing everything" (Lyle 263)).

These days the Evasion anonymous and CrimethInc have parted ways (though that just might be a stack of Evasion hidden behind the counter at the bookfair table). The anonymous evader dropped out of the oogle scene, becoming an impossibly more obnoxious activist/community organizer type. Let us hope you never have to suffer a Thanksgiving dinner with him, as he complains: "You wouldn't eat motor oil, just because it was on the table. So why do you eat turkey, just because it is on the table?" CrimethInc moved on to a stance combining community organizing and insurrectionary liberal blocs. In order to assure their effectiveness they issue reports on their website, on any conceivable current event or hot button issue. These are basically position papers issued in response to whatever subject CNN is most heavily discussing. These are often purposefully simplified to binary Manichean stances, in order to assure that their public relations are effective.

The new anarchist can even buy a franchise from CrimethInc's Revolutionary Home Shopping Network. Their website offers a "literature distribution kit". For a mere $280 you can in

engage in "perhaps one of the most radical ways to distribute literature, our Lit Kit is one big box full of everything you need to table an event, or set-up a local radical literature distro". This kit gives the freshly minted anarchist everything they need, as long as all their distro needs is a singular mono-voice from one publisher. The factory showroom anarchist (complete with that new crust smell) can then do all the repetitive activities that their duplicate NPCs do in every city. They can set up a literature table & hand out the same printouts of PDFs. They can badly cook spoiled produce at Food Not Bombs. They can redistribute broken consumer goods at a Really Free Market. If they are lucky they can even don a black mask, confront the police at the most heavily defended point of symbolic power. Maybe they can even get beaten or arrested. This confrontation is only applicable if the symbolic power is Republican. For some reason these kids don't attack Democrats. If they are arrested, they even get to level up. Then they get to fundraise endlessly for their legal defense. Maybe they even get to be a political prisoner.

This polemic may seem harsh, but I am sure CrimethInc can take it. I have spoken to a couple of the major players privately. When they are not in the harsh light of performative politiking, their positions have a great deal more nuance than they let on. They even admit things that they would seemingly never admit in public. I would not even bother going this far critiquing an entity like It's Going Down. For IGD I would make a more basic suggestion, one from Friedrich Nietzsche: "And he whom you cannot teach to fly, teach to fall faster" (209). IGD should follow the path of Yukio Mishima. I know some will be shocked at this suggestion, assuming I mean the most problematic thing. I am not suggesting far right politics! I am suggesting ritual suicide, ideally with a katana.

I don't think the members of the CrimethInc collective could disentangle themselves this late in the game. So, I suppose this can only function as a case study to illuminate the problems of contemporary anarchist politics. Most anarchists try to reform the system, in order to more equally and thoroughly distribute control systems. They attempt to directly confront a power structure that vastly overpowers them, thus fulfilling their role as a spectacular image. Anarchists want to organize society, when they should seek to disorganize society. I might be criticized these days for having become an individualist anarchist and dropping any semblance of social anarchism. If we were in a position for a social/group revolt then it would be happening, at least to some extent. We'd already be living together on some land project, trying to separate ourselves from the Leviathan. We don't have these connections, thus I only have individualist models. I might also be criticized for being purely critical, of offering no realistic program of action. I'd rather this than to engage in actions that make the situation worse. But okay, if I must give a course of action: we need to come up with new ideas. Anarchists are so mediocre because we don't try to change the rules when we are stuck in a double bind or a zero sum game. I don't know what this new course of action would be, and frankly expect that yours would be different than mine, that it would have to be different, because we are each different. Predetermined ideas and social roles have proven to be poverty-stricken. Instead, each of us could develop our own heterodoxical theory against a hegemonic control system. To do so anarchists would need to start refusing to be programmed, stop engaging in predetermined actions. **We must overthrow the gamemaster and begin playing infinite games.**

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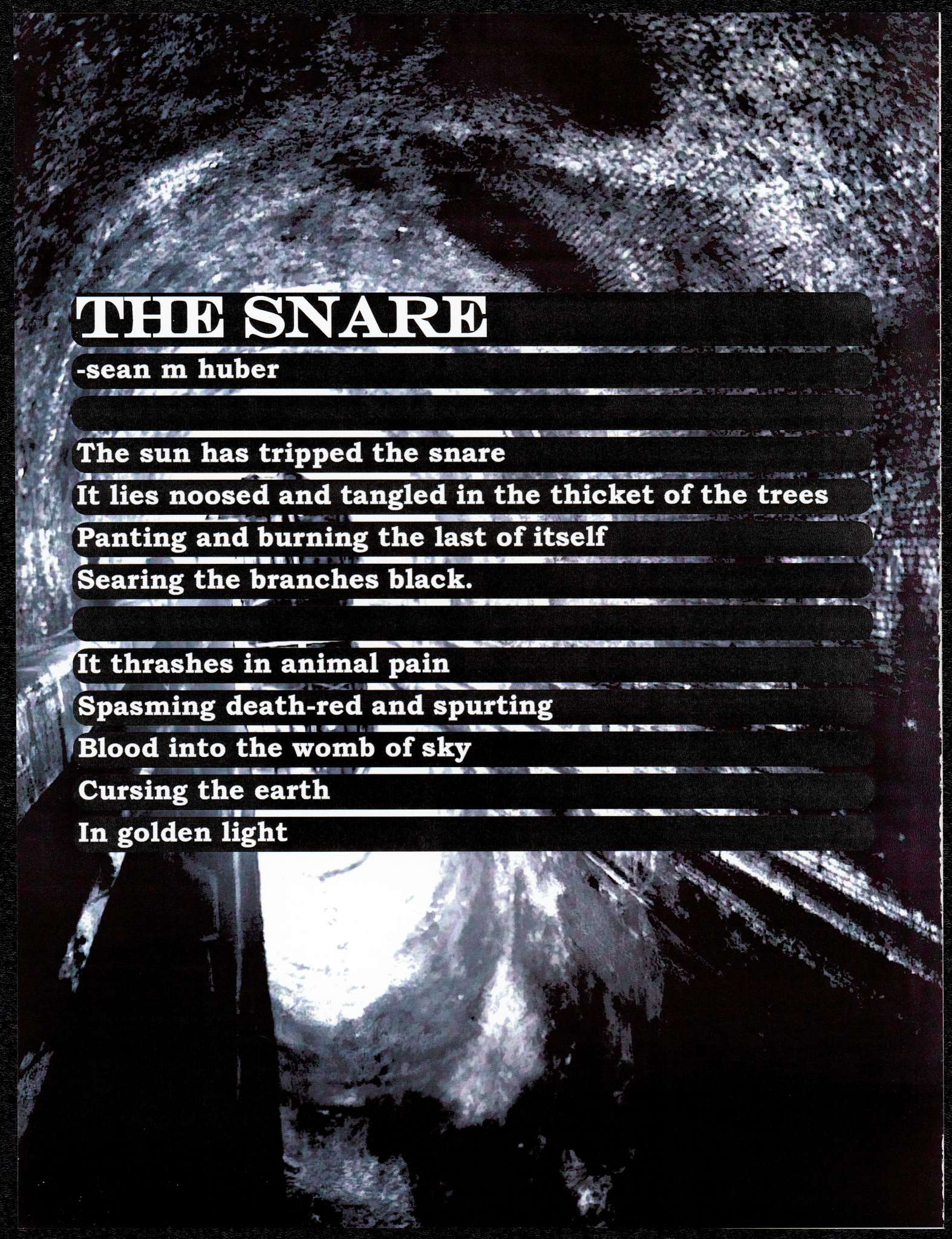
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THE SNARE

-sean m huber

The sun has tripped the snare
It lies noosed and tangled in the thicket of the trees
Panting and burning the last of itself
Searing the branches black.

It thrashes in animal pain
Spasming death-red and spurting
Blood into the womb of sky
Cursing the earth
In golden light

Under Our Feet Not Over Our Heads

Some Rambling Thoughts On Living In Relation

-Invecchiare Selvatico

It is a quiveringly cold winter morning and snow is piling up outside our cabin. For our particular place on the mountain, this amount of accumulation occurs only every few years at most. As inches turn to feet, I hear limbs breaking all around us and an occasional tree falling in the distance from the weight of these rare loads. This is a much needed winter pruning for these somewhat overgrown and significantly human-altered woods. I step outside and see icy breath floating from my mouth, rising, swirling, and disappearing a couple of feet away, becoming part of the rest of this world, poetry in action, life.

It is a mild early spring afternoon with continually fluctuating winds. Warm gusts from the southeast sweep up the mountain from the valley below while cool thrusts out of the northwest roll down the creek from the remaining snow pack above. Clouds move quickly in diverging directions like excited children freely at play. The air temperature changes dramatically as the sun ducks behind and peeks back through the skies amorphous white, gray, and black opacity. Occasional mist turns to downpours and clears in a matter of minutes. My aging body lags slightly behind, doing its best to adjust to the continual variations as I dig and plant peas, beets, and potatoes in the damp soil.

It is a hot summer evening and although the brutal and unforgiving sun has finally set behind the steep mountains to the west, it is still suffocatingly hot and stuffy. The slight fingernail crescent moon is stained burnt-orange-red from the now seasonally perpetual smoke that only slightly irritates my lungs, as I am now acclimated to its acrid taste and stinging rasp. Swooping bats acrobatically dive at endless dancing mosquitos who have come to life in swarms for this brief window before darkness fully envelops the clearing in this thick forest. I breathe quick and shallow as I recline on the bone dry grass, wipe dirty sweat from my brow, and sip on a cold beer that was chilled in the creek below.

It is a cool and crisp autumn night and I hear a young deer's hooves crunching on the fallen madrone, ash, and maple leaves that piled up behind the garden. I think she is hoping to push her head through a broken section of the old patchwork fence to feast on the last throws of our late summer's bounty. I smell the sweet, bitter, and sour scents of rotting tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and melons that did not make it through last night's freeze. I contemplate what tomorrow's tasks might be as I continue to wrap up this year's fall harvest before settling in for the long, dark, wet winter up here, high above the ravaging dysfunction of their rapidly degrading world, with those I hold up with, those I love.

Each cycle and scene passes around and around again and again, each time altered, some years very much more so than others, but always somewhat different, and still always very much the same. Some motions go deeper, into the ground where they can sleep and nurture and grow, while others evaporate into the atmosphere, only available again in memory and in dreams. Despite civilization's constant noise, jarring spasms, and overstimulating distractions, when stepping back for perspective, it seems we each pass through this world almost silently as the world passes through us much less so. The constant momentary changes seem fleeting compared to the long visions, the approaching eternal qualities of place. And the thinking turns to doing, eventually becoming



feeling and into knowing and being, and then finally belonging — the being over time with people and place. This is the process I am and will always be deeply immersed in, in relation with, always in some ways becoming, even when, especially when, I inevitably decay back into this cycle again.

I am here. I am home. I belong, at least beginning to. There is no greener grass, no over the rainbow, no promised land, just like there is no correct idea to adopt, no politics to entangle me, no righteous epic battle to come, no anarchic revolution to continually prepare for. From this side of things, for all meaningful contemplation, there is not even an impending collapse that hangs over me. Despite all generalized narratives, I am becoming an inseparable part of an organic dynamic of very specific people and place… the long and extended beginnings of some return to belonging. The world out there, Their world, is a dead-end, a waste of time, an endless distraction from my life. It is filled with things that do not make sense here, could not make sense here. They do not translate or fit. They are foreign to this place and could only work towards its instability, degradation, and eventual destruction. I seek connection and refuge. I need to reintegrate, to belong. This is the only thing worth living and dying for — the intimacy of our authentic life. This is my life, inside of me, between us here, and under our feet.

Beginning To Be-Long

I believe one of the strongest urges within each of us (to a greater or lesser extent depending on the individual and their experiences) is to belong to something, to be an integral and unique part of a larger dynamic outside of ourself, but as ourself. This belonging extends backwards and ahead, but is seated in the present, where we are, despite periods of dislocation, distraction, and disassociation.

I truly understand us to be inherently interactive beings, not nations or peoples or comrades or communities or scenes or friend groups or networks, and especially not identities, but something more vital and integrated deep in our lives. I believe that at our most interesting formations, our most "primitive selves" some might say, we are small packs of unique specific-ness and overlapping peculiarities intertwined deeply within somewhat larger tribes of more general, yet still very specific, affinity. We are pack animals, not the kind that carries other people's shit, not a mule or donkey or llama or camel, but the ones who hunt in the night together and lick each other's wounds, our wounds, not "The People's" wounds. Despite what seems to be the general inclination for the most slavishly, uncreative, laziest, and most restricted of our species (seemingly most civilized humans at this point), we are not inherently part of a domesticated herd. Nor do we walk alone. When we look more honestly away from the alienated, artificial, and hyper-domesticated space of society and towards something very different and eternal and specific to situation, I absolutely think that at our most direct and authentic relational experience, as human animals, we run in packs. I no longer need to remind myself that Their reality of emptiness and alienation is only one very troubling way of where, how, and who we are, and that there are so many other paths and motions. And again, as a sort of mantra echoing from the forests and canyons, I repeat that it is most vital to look inside of us and between us, and, perhaps most importantly, under our feet, not over our heads.

Our intricate and vast evolutionary processes have incorporated the specific and diverse environments encompassing and creating the variety in our species, but also the myriad of overlapping ecosystems within and between us. We might be able to *survive* alone (and that's a colossal "maybe"), but we simply could not *live* (and there is a vast difference here) without others who experience the world amazingly similar to how we do (something identity attempts miserably to mimic and replace). Surviving is just keeping our minimal bodily functions going, a life-support system, the bare minimum essentials minus the personal agency, relationships, and desires (kind of like socialism, for instance), the body without the spirit. This is what civilization has done to us. We are stuck in something that does not make sense, does not serve us, that we do not belong in, that only enslaves us deeper and deeper with each step we take.

Living, on the other-hand, is an endless and beautifully dramatic experience of being present, underneath all of the civilized detritus, baggage, and armor, and even despite it. The problem isn't *if* we can live together, but *how*. How is an almost limitless possibility, to a point, but without a deep understanding and connection to what's directly around us, from inside ourselves, outward to our kin and pack and its relationship to a larger tribe,

and under our feet to the place we dwell and all the wild dynamics at play, we can only reproduce what harms us. So, the questions that I concern myself with seem to be primarily of scale, dynamics, place, and peculiarities.

Considering this, without apologies, these are vital truths to me, my beliefs informed by my experiences: Domestication is the only option within civilization. We can only be slaves within society. The collective only allows us to be cogs. We might, however, live freely in small-scaled, place-based, and self-directed packs within tribes who depend deeply and intricately on one another for intimacy, nourishment, protection, and authenticity. Perhaps we once lived this way, maybe, in some ways, some may again. As we move to the edges and into full abandonment of Their world, our lives can begin to transition into something more like this, especially if our time and vital energies are not sucked, twisted, used, and wasted by petty games of politics, performative resistance, constant triage, or the more general sickness of Their enslaving technological and meaningless post-modern culture.

Ceremony As Living, Living As Ceremony

While attempting to find meaning in this ending time of the perpetual piling up and collapsing onto itself, this dystopian data-bank, this genetically-engineered pig with photo-shopped make-up, this superficial collage of surface material and undigested rhetoric, it is helpful to avoid shallowly trending movements in spiritual and philosophical realms. It has become quite fashionable to pay lip-service to primitive, animistic, astrological, taoist, and mycologically-metaphoric understandings, but typically the depth leaves much to be desired and often becomes a rationale, an excuse, a cheap nod, a method of temporary philosophical virtue signaling, or just plain empty rhetoric. These understandings cannot just be read about online, but need to be experienced and lived over time in context.

For instance, it seems all the rage these days to fancy oneself an animist, which I am fairly sure will not last more than a few seasons, like most counter-cultural trends superficially mimicked from more authentic realities via cyber-culture in these painfully-prolonged ending times. This newfound "missing piece" is usually exclaimed proudly by some urban dwelling scenester with an iphone permanently attached to their very opposable thumbs (except for maybe on pathetically-performative gestures like "Phone-Free Fridays") or their not-to-dissimilar rural hipster counterparts pretending to homestead for a few years. I am certainly glad that some folks are turning in the direction of more integrated meaning and living-connection and away from the cold and clinical dispirited realms of science, atheism, and rationality. I sincerely hope they go further and deeper in, more than just hobby-like dabbling, wearing it as a costume, regurgitating sound-bytes, putting it into a zine, etc. My experiences have shown me, however, that most will simply glean from the surface to add to the collage of their integrated intersectional identity. Then, most will move on when their performance is over, fashions have changed, and the newest platform, jargon, and pedestaled hero comes along to use as hip sugary icing on their more embedded and programed ideologies.

This opportunistic and shallow spiritual overlay especially feels to be the case when some newer converts to animism need to consider the question as to "if AI is alive". It reveals their general post-modern, superficial, dislocated, non-internalized view of an animist understanding and life-way. It seems, for many, the adoption of animism is often used as a catch-all to fill in all the gaping holes in their perspectives and to keep feeling positive and hopeful about their trajectory and scene. I do not specifically use animism as a way to describe my understanding of reality, but I feel very close to it as a way of being. I deeply understand and appreciate that I live in the infinitely animated world of life, and that all things in their most free forms are spirited and alive. Clearly, for me at least, this does not include the cold and artificial mechanizations of technology and ideology, nor the walking-dead slave-reality they produce.

One way some have suggested to deepen our connection of our unique self with the rest of our being, with those we are in direct and extended relation to, and with the place we live, might be through something that could be explained as ceremony. I believe that when we live a moment authentically, present, in place, in season, in deep open honest relations, and within the dynamics of wild freedom, simply put, ceremony is living, living is ceremony. No need for reified rituals, corny customs, spiritual specialists, or thinly-veiled ideologically religious predictions, when we realize, remember, and live our reality as fully as we can.

I was reminded of this reality today as I processed and stored away some of the bounty from our ever-expanding herb patches, perhaps my favorite parts of our meandering mountain garden that includes the flavorful, pungent, boosting, calming, preventative, and healing plants we grow; essentials such as lavender, rosemary, tarragon, thyme, fennel, echinacea, savoy, elderberry, goji berry, marshmallow, self-heal, purple and white and black sages, skullcap, lemon balm, dandelion, burdock, comfrey, cleavers, catnip, nettle, calendula, chamomile, peppermint, meadowsweet, feverfew, valerian, plantain, motherwort, hyssop, hops, hawthorn, elecampane, wormwood, borage, ashwagandha, ephedra, ma-huang, holy basil, and a whole bunch of the spiciest oregano that I've ever tasted and which I credit (along with healthy amounts of homegrown garlic, clean(er) mountain air, living microbial forest-infused spring water, and a robustness and mental clarity that I attribute to very little cyber-world engagement and sufficient physical activity) for keeping sickness and that much-feared global virus at bay better than any technologically and genetically-engineered and for all practical purposes legally and socially mandated vaccine, enforced lock-downs, social-distancing, or mask ever could (I'll leave it at that for fear of being considered a "right-wing conspiracy-prone wing-nut" by some supposed anti-civilization anarchists who in certain terrains seem to have developed fairly reactionary attitudes and progressive politics lately, whether they recognize it or not, sorry to say…).

Today, I was mostly interacting with culinary herbs and other more gentle medicinals. An almost overwhelming smell of intermingling plant fragrance swirled around me and filled our kitchen, invoking a subtle, yet very noticeable, base-level earthy high. As I pulled the dried herbs from their branches and stalks and rhythmically ground them between my well-worn hands, I wondered how many generations back this task goes (skipping long periods of distraction and displacement, perhaps), and realizing that it has become ingrained in my seasonal doing without much thinking about it, without it really even being taught to me, somewhere between watching and listening and intuition and repetition. I begin to ponder micro-culture, customs, traditions, tasks, chores, and things centered on living, rather than the abstractions and projections of theory and politics and religion, and I wondered what it was like before we had to think about any of it, when we just did it as part of our lived experience in the world, learning it in the most subtle, yet very direct, way that things are passed on by watching and doing again and again over time. Then, thinking back on ceremony, as most modern people conceive of it, as an unfortunate separation from these vital things I do in my life, where I am at, with those I love.

In my herbal stupor and with these topics in mind, my memory begins to drift back to recall a handful of the many essays that different voices of my own peculiar and almost countless selves wrote in *Green Anarchy* almost two decades ago (*see below). It was a period just before and just after my partner and I fled concrete, steel, silicon, noise, and surrogate activities of scenes for our mountain home of wood, soil, rock, water, and direct living to begin this wonderful unfolding and reconnecting journey. These writings were, in may ways, the segmented articulation of what I was to explore over the next many years, inside myself, between myself and those who were and are part of my family, pack, and tribe, and with this place I call home. When I go back to read some of what I had written back then, I feel that I was beginning to connect, getting on my path. And yet, the world, and the anarchist space in particular, has gotten so much terribly worse, with proposals by most for where to go and what to do flimsier than ever. I do not think this a reflection on me as much as of the world and its avatar-like players.

But I still want to prod and probe. I can't help myself. In these ongoing explorations I do not wish to shy away from the non-binary space, the nuanced understanding, the complex reality, the subjective and situational understandings. I do not want to exclude so many other explanations and realities beyond explanation or even comprehension in more conventional states of consciousness. I do not want a disenchanted world, yet I want to move with intention. I do not want simple answers, but I want to step somewhere meaningful. My own understandings and experiences and the actions which grow from them are my main motivations, but informed in certain ways by the perspectives of others' lived realities. The easy and absolute answer is the most vulnerable solution to be used by power, making soldiers for armies of ideas and control. Nothing an anarchist or any other living being would want to be. Nothing that is useful in a living world. I want something very different, something more. I choose life.

Stuck Within The Perpetual Social Struggle

Reconnection to life and desertion from society is no simple or easy task, or even fully obtainable in a lifetime, but in my opinion, an important process to begin, one which integrally effects every aspect of our lives. It is important to take into account the fact that we are all so damaged and are grasping for things to make us feel more whole, or at least to distract us from our broken hearts and twisted spirits. Their world is filled with ideas, objects, and surrogate activities to fill this emptiness, with most digging us deeper and deeper into despair, often without realizing it. Even up here, away from so much of it, offline and disconnected, we are still not immune from interactions with the sickness, directly at times, but often second and third hand through others in our lives, and by the very fact that we are still dependent for some essential sustenance (or, on some levels, we continue to make choices which keep us there). This honest recognition is not over-run with guilt or rationalizations, just something to work through over time. Most people, however, tend to use this unfortunate situation as an ongoing pool of excuses and reason for sinking deeper into the machine's tentacles. Many say: "Well, this is the world we live in today. Do you want to be left behind and drift further outside of it?" Yes, I certainly do. Who flipped the script for anarchists? When did the dominant culture become our barometer? When have we wanted to be a part of society?

One current that some of the more bravado-presenting people tend to get trapped or lost in is the perpetual tension of fighting for a "better world". Stuck within this unending struggle are most insurrectionary anarchists. Many of these highly combative (at least in rhetoric and posture) anarchists can often be distilled down to their base as more of the same unrecognized populism plaguing political history and the endless struggles for social power, smothering freedom and sucking at the vitality of our direct lives, making us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually anemic and desperate. It is an approach that attempts to appeal to the "common people", to those who feel that their concerns have been and continue to be disregarded by society, the victims and their dutiful allies. It is written by people who think they know a better way to orchestrate, intervene in, utilize, and organize [read: control] situations and people (and it is probably no coincidence that many of these types also come from class backgrounds somewhere up the food chain a bit). They either opportunistically rationalize or unconsciously absorb the struggles and activities of others to explain and demonstrate their own ideologies, philosophies, and agendas played out in the world. It may be true that most anarchists who use this approach and language are not necessarily trying to be a vanguard of a populist project (their rhetoric often explicitly claims an aversion to this) but they often create this dynamic which is so deeply ingrained in the language, actions, and goals of social war — that is a war over society or at least some sort of influence on or control of it, rather than against it or away from it.

How many times do the images and reports of over-simplistic and politicized graffiti and burning banks need to be reprinted in zines or displayed online along with some insurrectionary anarchist explanation and fiery slogan before we begin to be suspicious and feel the perpetual co-optation and over-inflation. Sadly, in their perpetual amnesia these propagandists somehow forgot so much more than they have picked up along the way. Sometimes someone breaking a window and stealing a television is just that, someone wanting a free tv. I can appreciate that at face value. "No," claims the insurrectionary anarchist, "it is the marginalized and dispossessed reclaiming their lives which have been stolen from them by late-stage industrial capitalism." Really? Do you even believe your own over-blown and delusional rhetoric? Only the naive and the true believers buy this opportunistically politicized description and convoluted explanation for illegality, even some of the propagandists themselves are quietly cynical about all of it. Can we just appreciate it for its aesthetic value and individualized actualization of desires? That's about all that is interesting or relevant about it.

Sure, there are those occasional times of true insurrectionary rebellion, moments of temporary rupture, undercurrents of deviance and subversion, no doubt. Don't get me wrong, I have had, and hopefully will continue to experience my share, but the most localized are always the most potent and meaningful. I love to bask in the glow of the implements of the civilizing process burning as much as anyone. They bring shimmering joy to my irregularly beating blackened heart, frenetic sizzle to my tattered mind, and aesthetic pleasure to my bleary eyes, but these authentic moments are very brief and temporal and much more rare



and anomalous than the insurrectionary anarchist would lead you to believe. Of course they want you to think this way: their analysis, agenda, hopes of an ever-increasing roll-call, guilt, self-image, and scene-life demands it. They perpetuate the delusion that we are always just one police killing, one judicial decision, one eviction of a liberated space, one genocidal war away from the powder keg being lit, so long as the groundwork of connecting various people's struggles and oppressions is done, so long as every potential opening is hyped up, intervened in, reacted to, and taken advantage of, so long as the black flame in our rebellious hearts continues to burn with the eternal spirit of perpetual insurrection (or some other highly exaggerated and marginally poetic phrase to front a hyperbolic insurrectionary momentum).

This extremely limited and predictable strategy stagnates into indefinite and performative self-righteous postures, tossing in the bright-eyed and passionate youthful fodder each new season. Add to this the fact that the culture at large has progressed to such an elastic and absorptive level that it actually appreciates and even requires this type of activity to function and help expand its tentacles and profile. Society needs its rebels, but anarchists have no use for society. And now, somehow, the role of the political activist is now being performed by many anarchists, more militantly in the streets perhaps, more extreme in rhetoric no doubt, but still for "the People", or even more problematic, "The World".

If critically examined, this populist anarchism can be seen in everything from the highly exaggerated rhetoric of insurrectionary attack to all of the over-inflated and mislabeled examples of so-called mutual aid and the charitable and social-support services of radical harm-reduction to the general ever-expanding inclusionary watering-down process that has taken over the anarchist space. While anarchism still seeks to change society, anarchy wants nothing to do with it. No need to get together with the herd, no need for popularity and network-building. We are not part of a social war. We are anarchically tribal and we flow like water. We fight in our own lives against that which impedes us in the moment, where we are, as we are. The systems's infrastructure as it affects us directly and as it inevitably encroaches upon our freedom is the place and time to physically attack, not the endless political struggles which are entangled in society's perpetual tensions. Some erroneously and moralistically call this "giving up", while I call it seizing the moment and the directness of our lives.

Sadly, anarchism and insurrectionary anarchism (specifically notable for the circles that I mostly come into contact with outside my anti-civ gang) is still very much a populist politic, rather than individuals attempting to more deeply understand themselves, focusing their lives on small groups of highly-affinity-oriented tribal relations of place, defending ourselves, situations, and locale, and destroying what, when, and where we desire with precision, swiftness, and invisibility. No need for spectacular shows. No need to explain. No need to convince. No need for vague and meaningless shows of solidarity that only tend to signal virtue and feed our emptiness with more nutrition-less calories. We do what we want, what we feel needs to be done, even if the others don't like it, sometimes especially if they don't.

Tell Me Where It Hurts

We sit in history at a time when most people are crippled by the fact that the immensity of all illusions are right in front of their faces. People feel hopeless, no doubt, by why are they acting so helpless? Those who live solely in ideas come up with or adopt the most updated versions of avoidance, distraction, and convoluted excuses. Those who are addicted to the adrenaline of activity (as opposed to its effectiveness or meaningfulness) are mostly just going through the same tired motions with a rebranding of their rhetoric. As the magnitude of ever-entrenching and absorbing power and destruction grows, most people's critique and response shrinks to mere players filling a position in an over-simplistic game or characters on a screen. For those of us who have no delusions of a better world within or from this one, self-empowerment, autonomy, and living one's deep desires here and now are paramount. Some of us are still guided by the unsafe, the beautiful, and the raw vitality of life. We do not hide behind ideas, hope, or false goodness. We embrace the active dynamics of a chaotic and living world, attempt to understand and flow within its patterns, and fight to live authentically on our own terms with those we choose. When the chains of safety are cast off a world of freedom can be unleashed.

So now I need to ask: Why are anarchists putting bandages on society when we should be

slaughtering it, undermining it, or at least leaving it to die of its own sickness? So many anarchists seem addicted to changing society, either fighting against certain aspects of it and for their version of it, re-making it in their projected image (as petty authoritarians do), or, by trying to fix it, smoothing out its rougher edges, and moving it towards something they want it to be (for everyone). Like most of the more combative forms of anarchism hoping to alter society into something more "fair" and "just", on the more localized level, a significant example of radical reformation can be seen in the various attempts at so-called harm reduction.

When I hear anarchists repeatedly talking about "doing harm reduction" it usually entails offering services that are already provided by government and non-profit social workers and organizations. It puts bandages on other's (usually not members of their immediate and intimate people's) often self-inflicted wounds or ones caused by powers over them that they were naively, foolishly, stubbornly, and yes, even circumstantially unable to avoid or minimize on their own. It reeks of that "anarchists are here to help you" foul stink. It often postures as mutual aid, but is very rarely reciprocal, and almost never original or from one's own authentic desires. It sucks endless energy, time, and thoughts from creating our own lives with people we have deep affinity with, and the needs we have. It can also be used, as we have seen many times before, as a way to push thinly-veiled and emotionally-jerking authoritarian agendas, usually centered around safety and identity.

Take care of yourself first, then the people directly around you. This is something that most anarchists refuse to learn. If this self-care positively affects and extends to those we come into regular contact with outside our immediate families, gangs, crews, and tribes, so be it, but that is not our reason. How long do people want to give CPR to corpses? How old is too old to suck on eternally maternalistic teats? How miserable is it to live on paternalistic strings-attached trigger-loaded gifts? How many times can someone be shot with Narcan before they are ever-so gently advised to consider another lifestyle? Sorry, these are choices, not diseases. Go ahead and regurgitate whatever opinions you call facts, data, and studies that are just thinly-veiled agendas to "disprove" this.

We all have personal agency, and as anarchists, this should be our bottom line. Yes, it is harder for some of us than others due to power structures, our lived experiences, and (dare I say it?) personal weaknesses. That's life. We creatively deal with the staked decks and marked cards we are dealt and make choices which enrich our lives. But, we currently live in the most artificial life-support system that could ever have been conceived and some wish to extend this into every minute detail and aspect of our lives. No other life form that has ever existed would coddle the perpetually weak to this absurd extent. It degrades the rest of us. Temporary injuries or illness or depressions? Sure. Old age? Ok, for a while, so long as methods of collaboration grow and alter with aging bodies and accumulated experience and wisdom. But endless lifestyle choices that are dependent on harm reductionists and charity for survival, sucking vital energy from the pack? And, putting out energy for others outside our people and towards the herd in general? Not our tribe. Call me xenophobic (I know you will), but I am not "afraid of others" outside my crew, I just don't care very much about them, not in any meaningful way. Why should I? How could I? I am not a Christian, a socialist, a humanist, or a propagandist, I am an anarchist.

Hopefully, each of us has developed or are actively curating deep and caring relationships in our lives to somehow try to replenish tribal ones which where bred, beat, or indoctrinated out of us, to help us when and where we need it, not some vague "community", altruistic harm reductionists, or social system to depend on. We all need help from time to time, but some people live off of it, and continue to live because of it. It has become a dependent survival strategy, consciously or not. Eventually, the rest of us end up reconstructing our lives around them to some degree. Fitness is not about physical strength or conditioning, its primary component is the mere will to thrive and the creative ingenuity which comes along with it. So many have lost that along with the packs and tribes to make this meaningful. Is this sad? Sure, but since when do we let our sadness direct us? Sadness serves us as an emotion for temporary care and reflection, not something to ultimately guide our lives. That is a trap that those with power use against us.

People have become less and less personally responsible, something that cannot happen to the same degree in a small group that is interdependent and face-to-face. Add to this the last few decades of increased victimization politics and the thin and fragile culture it has created. Add to this the technological dependance most people are

strung out on. The math gets very problematic and overwhelming... Real personal responsibility and deep relationships are being replaced by false, projected, and abstract allegiances, from the localized meaninglessness of "community" to the superficial identities and victim-statuses to ideologies and politics to the global "connection" pushed on us. We are misplacing ourselves. Who actually procures their own food and medicines, builds their own shelter, makes their own clothing, tells their own stories, creates their own happiness, defends themselves, their people, and their home? Who lives in deep relation to anything vital and authentic? Most people can't even create or express anymore, it is mostly cut and paste and copy and repost. And people endlessly seem to want to do less and less for themselves all the time. When I peek my head out from my people's self-directed place, I am pretty disgusted by what I see. I have no interest in investigating any further. I prioritize where my feet are at with those I have come to call family.

Yes, once in a great while a new and unexpected kindred spirit may cross my path. This happens in more direct and non-mass-oriented ways, unexpected diamonds in the rough. It almost never occurs on any meaningful level through networking or "shout outs", which tend to draw in the surface-dwelling politicized scene-junkies. I am open to new relationships in all directions, but I primarily open up to the rest of the incredibly vast non-human word in this way (a world in constant massive direct harm by every clumsy bi-pedaled opposable-thumbed big-brained domesticated ape who rarely even marginally embrace their precious gift of life). This relationship has always been more fulfilling and less problematic, not to mention more deserving of my limited time and energy than most human ones. The more humans I meet, the less I am interested in changing this priority.

Some have suggested that "tribal people" would take care of everyone and would not push away those in need. But those who misuse a fabricated understanding of tribal reality for their own political and ideological collectivism and paternalism are naive, ignorant, or dishonest. An agenda-driven utopian reading of anyone else's lived existence is not fair to them or us. There are so many intricate aspects to peoples and realities we cannot come close to grasping from outside, but I am quite sure that most successful (as in thriving over time) tribal people take care of their own first and would not spend their precious energies on the sicknesses of others not integrated deeply into their reality. You cannot translate a tribal reality to society. The dynamics are too dissimilar, quite incompatible in fact. Tribal dynamics cannot be scaled up to mass-scale, that is their strength and essence.

We did not make the intrinsic and systemic problems in society, and we sure as hell are not going to fix them. They cannot be solved, they are inherent and exponential. But we do want to live as free as we can, so escape is essential. How did anarchists become proponents for society? My motion is outward (away from society) and downward (into people and place), to escape and connect. But we have been torn away from the meaningful relationships with people and place for so long, how will we recognize our home and pack when we find it? How do we navigate around and through all of the damage? These are the questions to ask ourselves.

A Better Collapse Is NOT Possible

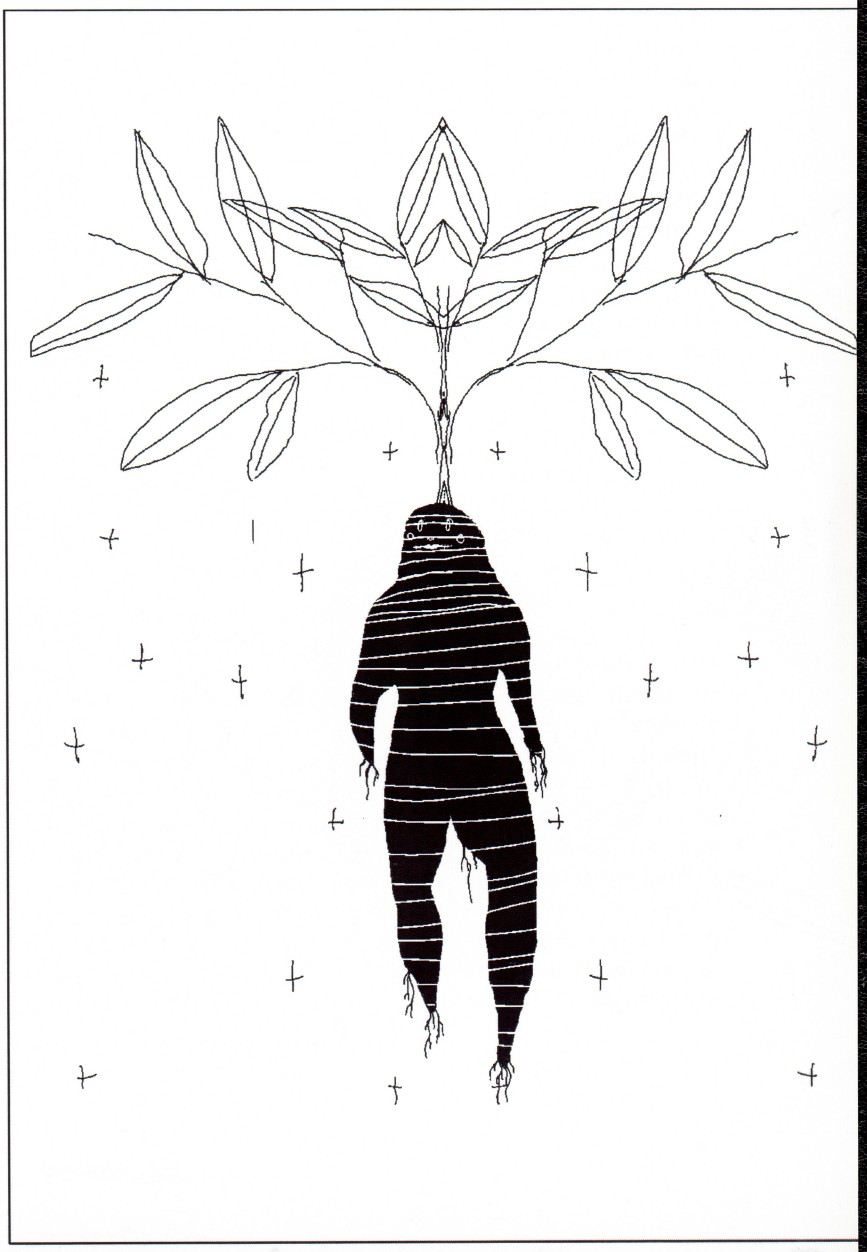
And finally, I feel it is important to push back on some of the utopian and more recent progressive-like-primitivist ways some have been describing reintegration, de-civilizing, or as some have portrayed it, a "return" to our "natural" state of being. I truly believe that some sort of tribal-like place-based reality that balances individual uniqueness is generally our "best selves", but this is not the idealistic egalitarian, gender-neutral, affluent society that some claim, nor is it the opposite that others denounce. It holds what we might describe as beautiful and ugly, peaceful and violent, playfulness and drudgery, if we solely look through our modern lenses and can only see the abstract binary that over-simplifies the ongoing complex organic process that contains the multitudes. It could not be any other way without some level of ideological and institutional coercion to flatten, organize, and construct. Offering some perfect world is a lie or at least a delusion. Suggesting a glimpse into a more connected way needs to be more honest and unscripted than this. Safety and security are not part of a free and living reality, but confidence in ourselves and our relationships to people and place might be. This seems like a subtle difference, but has very tangible, palatable, and significant distinctions.

In regards to this dishonest and unrealistic "soft-landing" approach into another world, a certain "primal anarchist" makes the claim that "A Better Collapse Is Possible." These are the pathetic words

of someone who has gone from a rebel to a liberal. I suppose this naively optimistic phrase could be interpreted in different ways, but based on the trajectory of the internet persona, podcaster, chef, bumper sticker sloganeer, tote bag hocker, personal-pledge-drive host, and primal-antifa activist who promotes this flawed proposal, the most probable reading is that of someone who has gone from being supposedly at war with civilization to someone who would like to offer his over-inflated sage advice on how to manage societal crisis to cause the least harm and most equity and justice for the deserving of the masses during the slow burn, while offering them a fairy-tale primal happy ending.

So-called "primal anarchy" is now at the forefront of a sad trend for certain primitivist-types to offer a progressive view of both human pre-history and their hopes for the future. They went from rebels against the future to progressives for the future. Cherry picking anthropological data and flattening "evidence" with non-nuanced interpretations, they paint a too-rosy perfect picture of the past and the future for everyone to sign onto as a critical mass, often catering to progressive people and their causes. When anarcho-primitivists tended to lose steam with the radical subculture after over a decade of cyber-slavery, technological-addiction, anti-fascism, and activism, the symptoms of collapse became the issues that they latched onto, forgetting that the totality benefits from this type of reform, adjustment, and symptom-chasing. "The sky is falling", "fascism is rising", and "nothing is fair" are the desperate cries of the proselytizer and the defeated, not the anarchist, and certainly not those of us who are enemies of society and civilization. This has been a sad and desperate turn, but what is more pathetic is that these are the ones saying that the rest of us have "given up", not my experience or reading at all. Quite the opposite.

It is more honest, effective, and fulfilling to move on with clarity, intention, and honesty. There is no revolution coming, and if there was, I know that I would not want to have any part in it. It would be more power-hungry players convincing others (and probably themselves) that this is not their motivation, and then brutally proving once again that it always has been. And, they would eventually come for me and those I care about. Revolution has always been a half-step informed by this sick world and it has always been an authoritarian project. No, some of us desire so much more. A completely different reality will not be read about, thought about, talked about, pushed on others, or agreed upon by a wider consensus. It can only be brought into fruition by doing, over and over, deeper and deeper, as part of our daily lives with those we care about. Anarchy is not the endless repetition of roles in a social context, but living as authentically as we can day to day. It is not participating in what moralists consider part of any axis of resistance, but reintegrating into the complexity of the living world and all the messy and sometimes dangerous stuff that entails. It is actualizing our lives here and now, and the most vital place to start is inside of us, between us, and



under our feet not over our heads.

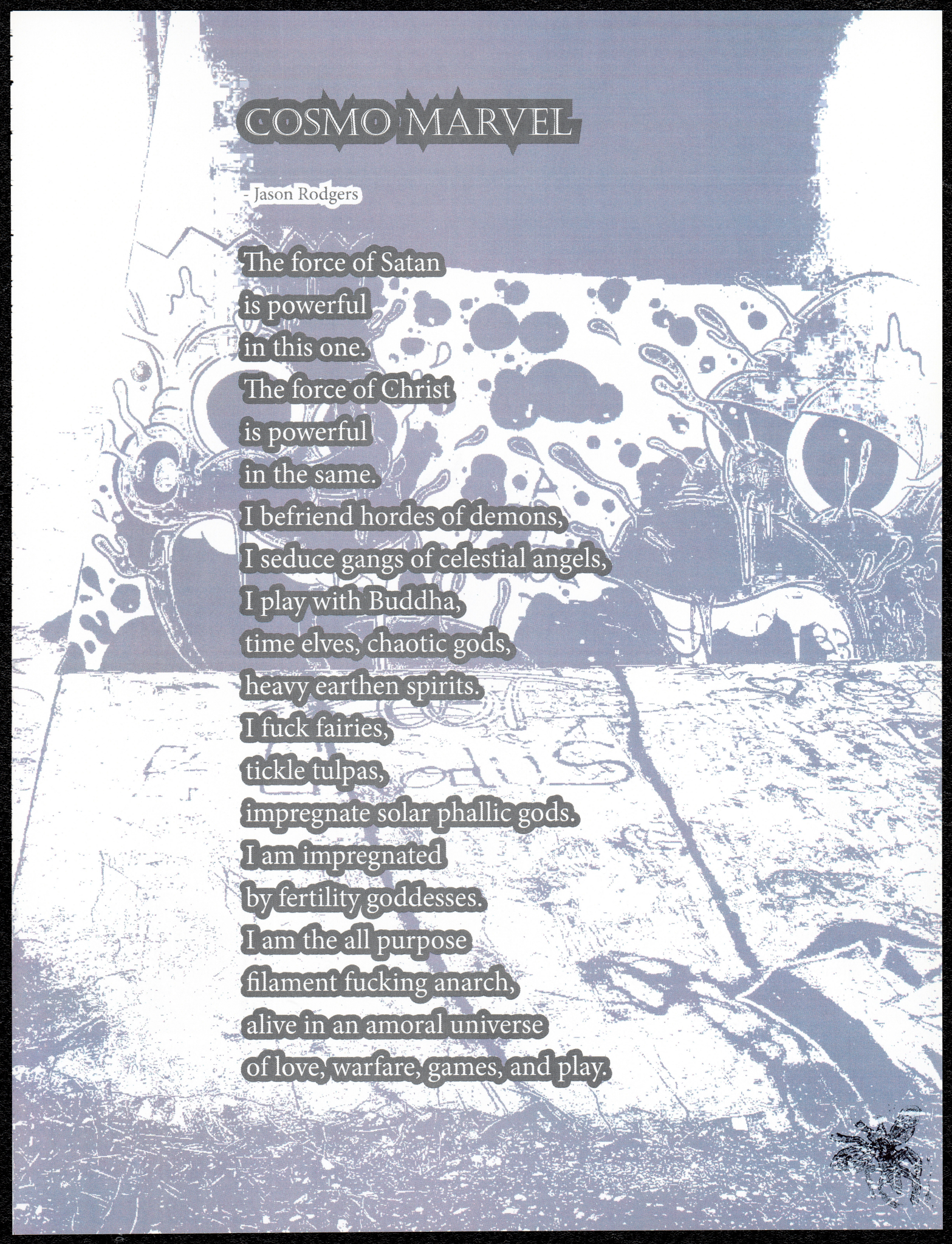
... and so, I finish pounding out my rambling thoughts and feelings on this beat-up old thrift store Smith-Corona, take a few deep breaths, stand up from my cluttered desk, and look out the window at the real world. I understand that this wordy exercise in expression, explanation, and exorcism, while it needed to be done (primarily for myself), in the larger scheme is almost entirely insignificant and will mostly be unread or misinterpreted, and quickly buried and unremembered.

I step out the backdoor and hear my partner gently humming some sweet old forgotten tune while weeding the garden, our daughters are laughing in a beautifully wild and playful way abruptly interrupted by sporadic argumentation, a wasp is buzzing around my head in a cautionary and self-preserving maneuver, one of our feline friends trots by with a vole in its mouth, a slight breeze is whispering through the forest as the sun is just beginning to duck behind the trees, birds and crickets and frogs are in their endless conversations (one's I will probably never really comprehend, only opportunistically project meaning onto them like some out-of-step clumsy fool), and I remember what really matters — in their dead world of cyber-zombies, superficiality, surrogate activity, and control: nothing at all; in this world, our life: everything.

Of all the pieces, the ones which seem most relevant now are: "We Were All Indigenous And Can Again Become..." by Homer Bust (#19/Spring 2005), "Meditation on Mediation" (#20/Summer 2005) and "I Am Not A Machine, I Am A Human Being: Technology As Mediation" (#22/Spring 2006) both by Mia X. Kursions, "Deconstructing All Relationships: Beyond Just Fucking or Fighting as Revolutionary Agendas" (#23/Summer/Fall 2006) and "Smashing the Petri Dish: Abbreviated Inquiry Into Abandoning the Concept of Culture" (#24/Spring/Summer 2007) both by A. Morefus, and lastly, "Connecting to Place In The Land of The Lost: Questions for the Nomadic Wanderers" by Sal Insieme in our final issue (#25/Summer 2008).

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We did not make the intrinsic and systemic problems in society, and we sure as hell are not going to fix them. They cannot be solved, they are inherent and exponential.



COSMO MARVEL

- Jason Rodgers

The force of Satan
is powerful
in this one.
The force of Christ
is powerful
in the same.
I befriend hordes of demons,
I seduce gangs of celestial angels,
I play with Buddha,
time elves, chaotic gods,
heavy earthen spirits.
I fuck fairies,
tickle tulpas,
impregnate solar phallic gods.
I am impregnated
by fertility goddesses.
I am the all purpose
filament fucking anarch,
alive in an amoral universe
of love, warfare, games, and play.

JESUS THE RADICAL GREEN ANARCHIST

-Bison Van Zanten

It is time many people stop seeing Jesus as the God of Patriarchy, War, Capitalism, Civilization, Christian Nationalism and the White Upper Class. It is also time many people stop seeing him as "A Good Teacher like Buddha or Socrates." It is time we start seeing Jesus as he really was: A Radical Green Anarchist. Jesus was a poor brown Jewish man who foraged food. Jesus claimed the greatest man to ever live was the hunter-gatherer John the Baptist and Jesus travelled many miles to be baptized by John in the river Jordan outside the confines of civilization in the wild. Jesus left his job and convinced others to leave their jobs to preach love (including a tax collector). Jesus flipped over the tables of those exploiting the poor. Jesus fed people and taught them in the wilderness. Jesus healed people in the market places where the sick were often exploited by fake miracle workers. Jesus told us not to use money. Jesus defended women, including ritually unclean women which to the Jewish Patriarchy made Jesus unclean too but Jesus did not give a shit because he did not observe traditional Jewish patriarchal values. Jesus' family deserted him when he began preaching love, healing people and teaching people to not be like the Gentiles "Whom have dominion over one another" Jesus often went into the Mountains alone to be with God and he often went into the wilderness alone -- including on his own personal vision quest (a vision Quest is an indigenous hunter-gatherer practice where one goes into the wilderness alone without food or water for several days to experience spiritual things). Jesus told us it is impossible for the rich to get to heaven and he told a young rich man to sell all his possessions. Jesus told people to leave their farms to follow him and at one point, in defiance against domesticators, he gave a legion of demons permission to enter a herd of pigs which then drowned themselves in the Sea of Galilee. While this sounds horrible, it would have been more horrible had the pigs lived longer under torture by the pig herders who would have then slaughtered the pigs anyways. Jesus doesn't apologize to the pig herders and instead the pig herders basically tell him to get back on his boat and go back to where he came from. Sound familiar in our own time? While Jesus was in the temple grounds of Jerusalem (which is what really led to his crucifixion because he was teaching Anarchism, Love, and Defiance towards religious leaders) a religious leader asked him which one of several dead brothers would own the first dead brother's wife in heaven. Jesus answered that no man shall own a woman in heaven. At another point some of Jesus' followers try to mansplain and shame a woman for pouring expensive perfumes on Jesus' head as ritual and honor for his coming execution. The men say that she should have sold the perfumes and given the money to the poor. The fact that Jesus followers are constantly thinking about the poor is already revolutionary for a group in ancient society & proves that Jesus was leading a truly Egalitarian Movement. Jesus furthers this by fighting against the patriarchy of his society by standing up for women and he tells his male followers that this woman will be remembered forever, that she has done a good thing and to not shame her.

In my book *Christian Anarcho Primitivism* I point out at 10 points that prove Jesus wants us to be Anarcho Primitivists. Here are those 10 points-

1. Jesus said the greatest man to ever live is John the Baptist who was a hunter-gatherer that lived in the wild, and who defied mainstream religious and hustle culture. Jesus was also baptized by this hunter gatherer. John the Baptist the hunter-gatherer had his own followers like Jesus did, spoke against the patriarchy like Jesus did and was executed like Jesus was by imperialists.

2. Jesus went into the wilderness alone several times to be with God. Jesus also went there with people to feed them at no cost. Egalitarianism in the Wild. What does that sound like?

3. Jesus shared food, foraged food and told his followers to beware of the leaven of civilization. Jesus told his followers not to use money or bring food with them when they traveled. They are to rely on the wild and others' kindness. Jesus followers foraged food on the sabbath which spit in the face of religious authority of his day who shamed people for doing anything on the sabbath and he proudly proclaimed the Sabbath is for Wo/man.

4. Jesus, as I wrote, went into the wilderness alone several times but he specifically went to the mountains several times and whenever he went to the mountains something very spiritual happened there. Jesus was not just a man of the Sea (his first followers were fishermen and he constantly traveled by boat) & the Desert (where he made his vision quest) but also of the Mountains. Jesus chose his 12 apostles on a mountain. Jesus prayed alone and meditated on a mountain. Jesus transfigured and saw his father and his elders on a mountain.

5. Jesus was always comparing his followers and his movement to that of nature. Jesus also told his followers to learn from nature. Jesus compared his followers and his movement to seeds, plants, and birds.

6. Jesus was one with nature and taught his followers to not be afraid of nature because he claimed to be a God of love & peace.

7. Money and work were of no object to Jesus. Jesus told his followers to not carry money on their travels. Jesus told the religious leaders that money is Caesar's and not God's. Jesus flipped over the tables of those that were buying and selling in the temple. Jesus left work to live as an Anarchist and spread his Gospel. Jesus told the young rich man to sell all his possessions and follow him and he told his followers to leave work and follow him.

8. Jesus was against domestication. Instead of making retribution or apologizing to the pig herders for effectively causing the loss of their whole pig herd, Jesus does nothing besides heal a possessed or mentally ill violent man and the pig herders tell him to leave. If Jesus were for Domestication he would not have asked people to leave work to follow him, he would not have been foraging, he would not have asked people to leave their farms to follow him and he would not have made retribution or apologized to the Gentile pig herders.

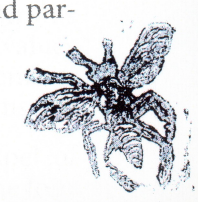
9. Jesus wanted his followers to be like children, and like servants to all. Jesus basically wanted his followers to be egalitarian, non-hierarchical and like children, which means what? Being a child means being feral, wild and free. Being like a child means not being hierarchical, monarchal, patriarchal or matriarchal, it means BEING. Jesus wanted his followers to not have dominion over each other and so in saying that he makes the most Anarchist statement since the Paleolithic.

10. Jesus obviously was against the patriarchy. We know hunter-gatherers had no patriarchy and that all sexes were equal to them. Jesus time and time again speaks for this. At the end of his life it was his female followers who were there with him as he was crucified and it was his female followers who watched to see where he was buried. Jesus' female followers discovered the empty tomb and told everyone about his resurrection. Christianity was begun by Women. Jesus just like Hunter-Gatherers was against the Patriarchy and it is of no fault of Jesus that Bronze age patriarchal men who wrote the old testament or patriarchal gentile men like Paul or other unknown Roman writers (like the writer of that very misogynist book 'Timothy') wrote such Patriarchal and misogynist things.

We must start seeing Jesus as he really was and -- if you believe -- Who he really IS. It matters not if you believe or don't believe. What matters is that this really awesome long haired, bearded, poor man who was in nature all the time and taught egalitarian hunter-gatherer values can inspire us and remind us to practice and keep those values so core to the Radical Green Anarchist Movement. Jesus, if anything, is a Radical Green Anarchist.

Note: All works cited are from "The Gospel of Mark" the most historically accurate of all the four Gospels and the first written Gospel. We know it is the most historically accurate and first written of all the four gospels because two of the other gospels -- "The Gospel of Matthew" and "The Gospel of Luke" -- borrow much of the same material heavily from it. "The Gospel of Mark" is the only Gospel that shares 90 percent of its material with "The Gospel of Matthew" and 65 Percent of its material with "The Gospel of Luke" As Isaac M. Alderman writes in his essay "The Synoptic Question":

"Just as similar wording describes an event or action of Jesus, as above, editorial remarks and par-



enthetical material are often repeated. This is a very strong argument for literary dependence, as it is difficult to think that editorial or parenthetical comments (such as "let the reader understand," – Mt 24:15/Mk 13:14) would be part of the story as told orally."

Isaac also writes that Matthew and Luke exaggerated what they found in Mark:

"What is interesting about this parallel pericope is that both Matthew and Luke have intensified what they found in Mark."

And Isaac also writes that sometimes Luke and Matthew changed Marks wording:

"Sometimes all three use identical wording (Matthew and Luke didn't alter what they took from Mark), and sometimes all three tell the same story differently (both Matthew and Luke, for reasons of their own, decided to change Mark's wording). Sometimes one gospel agrees with Mark in wording while the other does not. (Either Matthew or Luke changes the language of a pericope while the other preserves Mark's original language.)"

The fourth and last written gospel, "The Gospel of John," is very different from the other three gospels and is more theological in nature and thus can be ruled out as one of the first written gospels.

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Meditations on Irrationality

-Artxmis Graham Thoreau

"Another parameter is that we aren't interested in credibility or legitimacy with the gang of thugs running this planet. [...] So why should we care if we have any legitimacy? If we have any credibility? [...] So when you're called irrational, don't worry about it. We're irrational, and proud." — Dave Foreman, 1987, *Earth First!* 13, no 2.

It isn't a secret to anarchists that so-called radicals are often soldiers of the fringe of the existing morality. They seek out and fight for a basic liberal framework. *Liberty, equality, fraternity.* The argument is sometimes like "Society doesn't practice what it preaches." But isn't that the job for reformers, to hold society accountable? The same criticism can apply to how radicals argue for their position, too. Appealing to science, data, and other basic assumptions are methods of the current paradigm, not of a radical momentum that calls *all* into question.

When the issues of resistance, tactics, and strategy are brought up, we operate on the assumption that an ideology underpins them. There is a system of thought at play, one that can be argued for, propagated, and disseminated to the masses. Both the anarchist-communism of Malatesta and the Bolshevik-communism of Lenin are relevant examples. Malatesta said the goal of propaganda was "to raise the moral level of the masses and induce them to win their emancipation"[1] and Lenin conceived of it as aiming towards "[getting] the working people and those oppressed by capital [to] take up such a position [ie, revolution]."[2] If our ideas are at base, propagatable, we must then see them as marketable. Simply another menu item or buffet choice at the ideological supermarket. Our ideas, values, beliefs become commodities, competing with other commodity-ideas. And commodities assimilate. Even if an idea is at one point radical, you can surely find it at *Hot Topic*, trending on some social media platform, or worse: being dissected and categorized by academics in shitty papers few people will read. Some may argue this is actually a good thing! That our ideas can spread quicker and more efficiently if they're found on t-shirts, interviews, and ever-expanding short-form content. This is capitalist theory. **More is better, better is more.** It reduces ideas only to non-threatening appearances. Radical ideas are not found on screens.

For example, look at Socialism: It once represented a rupture from capitalism, even if it still represented a refined civilizational system, it was antagonistic to the capitalist mode of production. With time, this has changed. It initially changed to a reformist tendency in order to function with electoralism/parliamentarism. Socialist politicians had to play to a slave-mentality voting-base and existing regulations. This emasculation made it easier for the commodification of socialism. Now I can go to nearly any mall and find socialist merchandise. I can find socialist meme pages with millions of followers. The emancipation of the working class will be the work of the marketing teams alone!

How has anarchism impacted? Is anarchism actually as trapped as Socialism? Yes, but arguably in a worse way. It has lost rabid critique in favor of the strongest flavor of identity politics. Yes, socialism struggles with it, but I think its authoritarian, assimilationist tendencies are naturally oriented towards these ideas. It is simply more disappointing and impactful that anarchism has become just another ideology. While I am not the first to bring it up, we must discuss how anarchy and anarchism differ. As I said in *Locating a Green and Pink Anarchy*, "When I say *Anarchy*, I speak of anarchy-as-negation, a continual process of struggle against all that afronts us as individuals and friends, by which I mean Civilization / Leviathan / Mass&Class society. Others, who say *Anarchism*, mean anarchism-as-affirmation, a future of establishments, often a Left-Anarchism, so to speak. Their Anarchism is a moral imperative and a system of politics, not of desire and anti-politics"[3]. My ideas have some a long way since I wrote that piece in 2021. I've come to realize anarchy is a *spirit* or an *instinct*, not simply an anti-politics. **Anarchism** is the political crystallization of **anarchy**. Again, an ideology or dogma: built-in assumptions and expectations of its followers. By spirit, I mean a momentum throughout history, a (innate?) compulsion to act in some way. We've heard the ex-



pression before: the spirit of rebellion. Bakunin once wrote, (before his turn to anarchism): "Let us therefore trust the eternal Spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternally creative source of all life. The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too." [4] We can find threads through historic struggles and moments. Anarchy is a possible expression of Indigenous resistance past and present. Anarchy is a molotov cocktail during an anti-cop protest. Anarchy is DIY. Anarchy is subversive art. Anarchy is rejection of centralization of resistance, like the Eugene anarchists during WTO. **Anarchy is all resistance against domination.** Anarchism is the systemization and rationalization of this spirit in an expression the system understands: political resistance, largely based on Enlightenment beliefs. By instinct, I mean an impulse, not an appeal to some essential nature of humanity. I won't, like the primal anarchists, argue we are born anarchistic. Anarchy, like its counterpart of authority, is more than politics and is beyond it. Kropotkin once wrote somewhere that there has always been anarchists and statists, even before politics. How is this relevant? If we reject anarchism (politics, ideology, marketable) and embrace anarchy (anti-politics, spirit or instinct, non-marketable), then our understanding of tactics and strategy shifts. We're not syndicalists, out to propagate a correct ideology to spur the masses to federate and take over their places of slavery -- I mean employment. We need to embrace irrationality. We must be ungovernable, and that begins with being undefinable. How can a belief be beyond definition? Did I not attempt to above, with phrases such as "anarchy-as-negation" or "Anarchy is a molotov cocktail"? Yes, perhaps there is a contradiction, but also a limit of language. I prefer to see what I am doing as motioning in a direction, not mapping it. If I point to the treeline, you and I might be looking at different trees or birds. We see the same vista but our understanding and focuses are different. Ideologies seek to make it so everyone sees the forest the same. No deviation. No interpretation.

Take Marxism, for example. Precise definitions (class), systems of thought (dialectics) and suggestions (party, nationalization) are perhaps helpful on their own, but together, create dogma. Simply walk into any one Communist Party or grouping and you'll find a latter-day prophet (revolutionary) preaching one truth (correct-line) over someone else's heresy (revisionism). A specific example, in 1979, there was an essay titled, "Beat Back the Dogmato-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tsetung Thought." How is this different from Irenaeus' attack on the gnostics in his *Against Heresies / On the Detection and Overthrow of the So-Called Gnosis*? This critique of systemization is not new or some niche anarchist view. Early anarchists were skeptical of sociology and "laws of social development" overcoming the personal and passionate moving forces. Paul Avrich's "Anarchism and anti-intellectualism in Russia" is a particularly important piece. Avrich points to Bakunin, who he quotes as saying " (I am) not a philosopher and not an inventor of systems, like Marx." [5] Avrich also quotes a member of the Black Banner (Russian: Chernoe Znamia) group:

> *An idea must not be left to pure understanding, must not be apprehended by reason alone, but must be converted into feeling, must be soaked in 'the nerves' juices and the heart's blood.' Only feeling, passion, and desire have moved and will move men to acts of heroism and self-sacrifice; only in the realm of passionate life, the life of feeling, do heroes and martyrs draw their strength .... We do not belong to the worshipers of 'all that is real is rational'; we do not recognize the inevitability of social phenomena; we regard with skepticism the scientific value of many so-called laws of sociology.* [6]

On the other hand, anarchism wasn't always as scientific and rationally-centered as it is today. It was not until the second-generation of anarchists (Kropotkin being the Prince of this group) that we see the idea of a scientific anarchism, one needing not just systems of thought, but science to justify itself. *Mutual Aid* is a primary work in which Kropotkin felt he needed to find evidence of cooperation and mutuality in nature to justify anarchism as a natural possibility for human social arrangement. To be fair to the old man, I like *Mutual Aid* as a counter to the false idea of social Darwinism, another attempt of rationalization, but for right-wing politics. And true, Kropotkin was against **total** scientification. He rejected Marx's labor theory of value, because economics is not a science. He also stated that anarchism doesn't come from the social sciences.[7] Kropotkin means we can't **yet** justify anarchism through science, specific disciplines of social science have yet to be developed to do so.

Now, don't get me wrong, rationality in our beliefs is not *bad*, but it should not be the dominant form of thought, especially in relation to strategy, which devolves into a numbers game. Think:

How many people can you message to get to the rally? How many politicians are we speaking to? How long will we last on the Instagram algorithm? In 1978, Jerry Mander made a solid observation concerning TV-exposure and activism in the 60s: "Accelerate the drama of each successive action to maintain the same level of coverage. Television somehow demanded that. As the stakes rose, the pressure mounted to create ever more outrageous actions".[8] Mander himself devalued "outrageous" (ie, violent) actions, but we don't have to in order to acknowledge that doing such actions *for the sake of exposure,* which today not only includes TV and newspaper coverage, but also short-form content and social media algorithms, is a continual appeal to the channels prescribed by civilization. Why are we opposed to emotional or even ethical/moral arguments and motivations? Why does it all need to be "reasonable" or "objective"? Why can we not embrace irrationality as the dominant form of thought and expression, relegating rationality to be a secondary or tertiary tool, maybe even coming to challenge its existence? The rational has become more than a primary method of consciousness, but a definite state of reality, of human nature, and social development. The universe and its laws are quantifiable and definable; we are rational beings; economic development needs to be rationalized, according to Marxists and corporatists. Everything has been limited to the appeal to the rational. To act irrationally is to act unnaturally, to be insane. On the grounds of the current paradigm, anarchists in general and primitivists in particular, are irrational beings. To quote Jason Rodgers: "The free person, the anarch, is an irrational entity."[9]

One avenue that worries me for the development of anti-civilizationism, and anarcho-primitivism in particular, is the ever-growing emphasis on anthropology and science. We evidently have lost sight of Perlman's great observation that anthropologists are graverobbers who use their evidence to suppress other stories and that their stories tell more about the graverobbers and their biases than those of the bones they put on display! James Van Lanen's *Human Rewilding in the 21st Century: Why Anthropologists Fail* is such a case. JVL spends much of the work on the attack against postmodernism, Leftist academics, and anti-rewilders. These are all good fronts for attack. The worry is the need to defer to the past to define our future. Why can we not acknowledge the primitive as a challenge to the (post-)modern, without the need to explain every aspect of hunter-gathers? I reject civilization not because I studied hunter-gatherer life, but because I despise civilized life. I hate industry, not because the science tells me about the incoming climate meltdown, but because I hate the monotony and being sold the same standardized shit. All other things are *secondary* to my initial rejection. I often articulate through a rational lens, but it is not my primary one. Really, I am less and less interested in even expressing myself in rational, scientific, and ethnographic terms. In fact, data and science can and often does support civilization, it is two of the terms civilization lays out for us. Choosing one set of data is another value judgment, not a radical position. We need spreadsheets and thesis statements to be seen as legit in our claims.

Besides our own tendency producing works that seek to debate on civilized grounds and in civilized arenas (academia, in particular), there are outsiders who seek to study us, categorize, and publicize us. There are numerous social science journal articles that seek to make anarchism into a category of study. I've recently found a series of new journal articles of the Galleanisti (terrorist-anarchist-bombers, we love 'em!), which I appreciate for the historic deep-dive, but we cannot divorce the study from that of the academic complex. They're not writing for the anarchists, they're writing because this is a realm to publish on. It serves the academic-industrial complex. Besides, should we celebrate universities digging into our spheres? We tend to have a caution of journalists in our spaces, but not scholars digging up our history and our current trajectories. Take Fern Tompsett, whose biography with the Colombia University of New York describes her as "...researching emergent political responses to climate change; in particular, **anticivilization activism** in the Pacific Northwest of the US (my emphasis)." This is not just our history, but our present and future being scrapped over for someone's PhD. I am especially cautious of not just inviting scholars in, but translating our logic to them. See any interview and how quickly the anarchists are forced to put their ideas to the test, prescribed by the journalists. This is true, particularly for violence.

Again, I am not against rational argumentation, I am critical of it being our first or even secondary method. We should take a long, hard look in the mirror and consider why we feel the need to express ourselves in this way. Are we seeking legitimacy in the eyes of specialists, of the masses, of ourselves? Why do we choose to speak the lan-

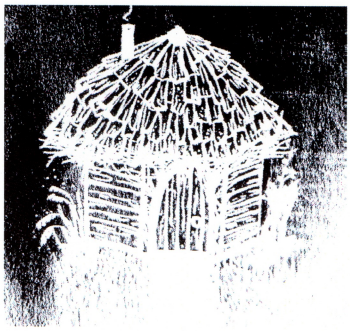
guage of our oppressor-system? We need to also ask: is any and all exposure good? Is exposure on our grounds and terms, or that of the publisher/network/department? I, ironically, am considered by many to be a very logical and "rational" person. I wish to embrace irrationality, but I won't deny this is difficult because our culture has ingrained this as the dominant mental faculty. In a world of rationalists, attempt irrationality.

The primitive, as an expression of anarchy, is an instinct, a rejection of the banal dystopia we live in. We may find inspiration in our primitive kin, but I don't look upon their social organization in the way a CPUSA member looks upon the Bolsheviks: with the need to replicate with religious fervor.

Notes:

1. Errico Malesta's "Anarchist Propaganda"
2. Vladimir Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*, "Several Conclusions"
3. Artxmis Graham Thoreau's "Locating a Green and Pink Anarchy" April 2021 (Updated October 2023), *Plastic in Utero* #2.
4. Mikhail Bakunin's "Reaction in Germany"
5. Paul Avrich's "Anarchism and anti-intellectualism in Russia"
6. Ibid.
7. Peter Kropotkin's *Modern Science and Anarchy*: "Anarchism, like Socialism in general, and like every other social movement, has not, of course, developed out of science or out of some philosophical school. The social sciences are still very far removed from the time when they shall be as exact as are physics and chemistry. Even in meteorology we cannot yet predict the weather a month, or even one week, in advance. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to expect of the young social sciences, which are concerned with phenomena much more complex than winds and rain, that they should foretell social events with any approach to certainty. Besides, it must not be forgotten that men of science, too, are but human, and that most of them either belong by descent to the possessing classes, and are steeped in the prejudices of their class, or else are in the actual service of the government. Not out of the universities, therefore, does Anarchism come."
8. Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*
9. Jason Rodger's "How Rational is Rationality?: How rational thought functions as social control"

We evidently have lost sight of Perlman's great observation... anthropologists are graverobbers



The primitive... is an instinct a rejection of the banal dystopia we live in.

RETURNING SONGS:

THREE INVITATIONS

FROM A MONISTIC WORLD

-Tamarix and Bree

As we apprentice to the world-as-it-is and deepen into the possibilities of inhabiting an Animate world, we have found an enormously helpful guide in the way of being known as Monism. as inheritors of the deeply fragmented and dualistic stories which so define our culture, Monism has proven itself a kind and reliable map to the territory, a finger-pointing-at-the-moon, a way of twisting and dancing out of the intractable joint-locks of Dualism and calling in bigger stories that allow for more beautiful, nuanced, and relational possibilities to emerge. here are three such stories who have helped us begin to imagine and inhabit such a world

Invitation 1: Confucius and the Lu-Liang River

Early one spring morning, Confucius and his disciples were walking along the mighty Lu-Liang River, and came to the bottom of the great Lu Waterfall. The mighty River, engorged with fresh snowmelt from the mountains, threw itself over a three hundred foot cliff before crashing down on the many sharp rocks which waited for it below. This meeting of water and rock created an enormous wall of mist and foam which trailed downstream for forty miles. Treacherous rapids waited at the bottom of the waterfall, making for a very chaotic and dangerous section of the River; not even the turtles, fishes, or crocodiles would risk swimming in this area. Confucius had just started sharing a short sermon he had prepared on the power of the River in contrast to the power of the human spirit when one of his disciples cried in alarm, "Master! There is a person up there, swimming towards the waterfall! They must be trying to kill themselves!"

The disciples and their leader strained their eyes and, sure enough, they saw a person swimming towards the precipice. Confucius, thinking quickly, scrapped his sermon and instead began to solemnly conjecture on the possible misfortunes and causes of suffering which had driven someone to end their life in such a way. As the body tipped over the edge and plunged into the frothy chaos, the solemn onlookers observed a moment of silence in the face of such tragedy and waste of life. Confucius sent a few of his disciples downstream to the River's edge, to retrieve the body in hopes of a proper burial.

After a few minutes, Confucius heard excited yelling as his disciples urged him to come and see. As the old master hurried towards the voices, he soon saw what they were shouting about. The suicidal stranger was swimming about in the rapids, darting around boulders, ducking under log-dams, and moving with the ease and grace of a dancer. Confucius could not believe his old eyes. He watched as a young woman emerged from the rapids, swam to the shore, and began wringing out her hair while singing a gentle melody. With disciples in tow, Confucius cautiously approached the stranger, "Excuse me, are you a ghost or a woman?"

Laughing, the woman replied, "Who, me? Are those my only two options? What an odd question to ask somebody, you silly old man!"

Confucius — still too bewildered by the entire incident to take offense at this comment — replied, "How did you survive the waterfall and the rapids? What is your secret? Do you have a special swimming technique?"

"Secret? Special Technique? This is simply my morning swim before I begin my day. I have no special way. I began with my innate wild nature, I honor this wild nature, and I fulfill this wild nature. There is no technique but the absence of technique. I follow along with River Lu and do not impose myself on her. As there is no distinction between myself and the River, there is no difficulty or fear. It is as easy as breathing."

"What do you mean by 'innate wild nature'? How is there no distinction between yourself and the River?"

"I was born into the current of the Tao, as were you. I have spent my entire life swimming in these rapids. As I have never known anything but this wild and chaotic energy, it is the easiest thing in the world to release my body and trust the process. It is dangerous, of course, but the danger does not arise from the tension between myself and the River. If River Lu

chooses to dash me against the rocks some day, then I will die. There is nothing I can do that will stop her. When that happens, it will be because it was the desire of the River, and not because I failed in my technique."

"This is remarkable. If what you are saying is true, then you have become one with the Tao, and are the most enlightened sage under heaven!"

Hearing this, one of Confucius's younger disciples felt a rush of inspiration and decided to try this technique out for himself. He turned around and began scrambling up the hill, despite the cries of protest and caution behind him. Arriving at the top of the waterfall, he swallowed the lump in his throat, closed his eyes, focused on the words of the woman, and plunged in the water. Immediately, the cold steely grip of the Lu-Liang River grabbed his waist and spun him in circles, bouncing his head off a few boulders before gleefully tossing him over the edge. The young disciple forgot all his noble idealism as the terror of the descent engulfed him.



When his head finally surfaced at the bottom of the waterfall, he gasped for air and, catching a brief glimpse of his master and friends anxiously watching him from the shore, decided to swim to freedom. Abandoning any notions of relaxation, trust, or one-ness with anything, he desperately fought the powerful current and tried to make his way to the shore.

Several hours later, two of his fellow disciples dragged his torn, battered, bloated, and limp body out of the water a few miles downstream. With hearts heavy with grief, they angrily confronted the woman, "Why did you lie to us? Why didn't you simply tell us what your technique is? Our brother listened to your advice and it killed him! You are as treacherous and evil as the River!"

Compassionately, she replied, "I did not lie to your brother, there is no secret that I am concealing from you. Your friend died because he forgot that he was also the River. He feared the Tao, and out of this fear was born separation. From this separation he believed that the River was his opponent, and this belief is what killed him. The River is not malicious or evil, she is simply a River. Your friend killed himself by trying to oppose the Way, by believing that he was different from the current, by choosing to assert his will onto the Tao. Even now, you are making the same mistake he did, by seeing the River as malicious and making her your enemy."

At this point, Confucius stepped in and said, "Enough of this talk. What you are saying is nonsense. The boy was clearly not a part of the River, and how could he have forgotten something that was never true in the first place? You are making up nonsensical stories to insult us and aggravate our loss. If you do indeed have a special technique, it is dark and dangerous. I see now why I originally thought you were a ghost." With that, the Great Master and his disciples departed from the banks of the Lu-Liang River, bearing the body of their deceased friend.

Many weeks later, after the burial ceremony and period of grieving was over, Confucius and his disciples came back to the waterfall and waited by the shore for the young woman to emerge from her daily swim. Under the pretense of keeping the community safe and seeking justice for the death of their friend, they bound her with ropes, brought her back to the village, held a trial, and found her guilty of witchcraft and sorcery. When finally given a moment to speak for herself, she calmly looked into the eyes of her accusers, sighed, and said, "Isn't this all so much more difficult than simply accepting the Way? What are you holding onto? What do you gain from your sufferings? So much effort and struggle, for what benefit? This is all so silly and yet… so heartbreakingly sad. Listen - can you hear River Lu now? She's calling to me." She then closed her eyes, smiled gently, and quietly hummed her strange song.

Nobody, including Confucius, knew what to make of this, so she was summarily executed.

The next year, the village dammed the River, in order to provide irrigation to the surrounding agricultural fields. The dam was named after the young disciple who lost his life there; the story of his death had taken on mythic proportions and served as a constant reminder to the community of the dangers of irrationality, youthful idealism and impulsiveness, and witchcraft. By harnessing the energy of the River, they believed they had also conquered the dark and treacherous spirit of the River — no longer a place of untamed and dangerous wildness, but rather a site of human superiority and progress. Across

the countryside, the dam was hailed as a triumph of the human spirit — a monument to technological ingenuity and civilization.

One spring morning after a particularly heavy snowmelt, the dam ruptured, sending a tremendous avalanche of mud and debris cascading downhill to the slumbering and unsuspecting village. The frustrated tensions of the Lu-Liang River which had built up for many years were suddenly unleashed in a riot of violent liberation.

The entire village was destroyed. There were no survivors.[1]

1 adapted from Chuang-Tzu's Inner Chapters (chapter 19, fragment 8), see especially Victor Mair's "*Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang-Tzu.*"

Invitation 2: Plato and the Chrysalis

Dramatis Personæ:

Plato the young Athenian

Council of Athenian Elders

Butterfly Woman

Chrysalis

Scene:

A young Athenian emerges from the cave where he has been secluded for the past four days and nights, undergoing a traditional initiatory rite known as oneiromanteia — dream incubation. He sits in front of the Council of Elders to share the dreams he has been given and seek guidance on what the Fates have chosen for him. The Sun, in counterbalance, slowly descends to the underworld, disappearing into the belly of the Earth as dusk settles upon the valley; a pair of Owls call softly in the distance.

Plato: Grandmothers and Grandfathers of Athens, while I am deeply indebted to you all for joining me here this evening, I am saddened to inform you that your time would be much better spent elsewhere, for my incubation was remarkably uneventful. Pointless, frustrating, stupid… cruel, even.

The Elders smile knowingly and nod for him to proceed

Plato: Tormented day and night with fever sickness and aching pains, I hardly slept at all. And what sleep was had was not blessed by sweet dreams but rather by terrible agonies and nightmarish hauntings. I followed the ritual taboos and prescriptions thoroughly, I swear it, but the gods have not seen me fit for a visitation.

All the days and nights I lay there, was I so tortured — trapped in some hideous shell, beset by some monstrous presence, unable to escape, hardly even to breathe. The only solace came from a song that I could barely hear, coming from somewhere outside my haunted enclosure, somewhere far away.

Yet no matter how hard I tried, I could not reach the song, could not move, could not get up and follow it where it wanted me to go.

The Elders: Do you remember the song? Could you sing it for us?

Plato: Only very indistinctly. It was something like this:

The boy intones a low, haunting melody. Several of the Elders begin to nod their heads and cry softly, as if they are familiar with the tune

The Elders: Thank you, it has been a long time since our hearts have been touched by this song. And while you were listening, is there anything else that happened? An image, a feeling, a memory, anything at all?

Plato: Yes, actually, there was this… visitation…

not quite a dream, for it felt more real than a dream. I could sense the presence of a beautiful winged creature, much like a Butterfly, but enormous — as big as the sky itself — waiting for me on the other side of my enclosure. She was calling to me, she wanted me to reach out and embrace her, but I couldn't. I was too weak, and the shell too strong.

It was cruel, so cruel…

The boy begins to cry

The Elders: Can you speak to the cruelty?

Plato: Why the gods would create such longing for beauty and then contain it in a shell — cold, hard, and uncaring? Why did they create evil, tyranny, chaos and disorder? Why do so many dreams never come true? Why are there limits and constraints to everything beautiful?

The boy begins to weep

The Elders: These are important and beautiful questions, young one. What else do you remember?

Plato: I believe she spoke to me, gave me a task of some sort, but I can't remember what she said…

The Elders: Well then, let us invite her here, and let her speak for herself.

One of the Elders begins softly blowing into a long, thin pipe-reed that emits an unearthly whistling sound. It is the calling song of Persephone — Goddess of the Underworld. Another stokes the coals in the firepit and adds an armful of wood, calling large flames to dance in the space between them. Another adds a handful of pungent herbs that release thick clouds of hallucinatory vapors into the air.

After all this occurs, two masked figures appear in front of Plato: a large well-built man bearing thick bullhide straps and wearing a glittering-green crystalline mask, and a beautiful young woman with kind eyes and large iridescent Butterfly wings. The man wraps Plato with the straps and holds him fast. The woman stands in front of him and begins singing the song of the Underworld, the song of the Ancestors.

Plato weeps and struggles violently against his bindings as Butterfly Woman sings softly to him.

Eventually, exhausted, he stops struggling and cries out.

Plato: What do you want from me? Why must I suffer further?

Butterfly Woman: Oh dear child, suffering is the furthest desire from our hearts. The choice to suffer or not lies entirely in your hands.

What do *you*, young Athenian, want from *me*?

Plato: What do I want? To answer me truthfully: what crime have I committed against the gods that they would punish me in this way, to have me bound like Prometheus and daily tortured?

What cruel cosmos would place these terrible longings in my chest and then wrap these hateful bonds of constriction around me?

Butterfly Woman: No crime, dear Plato, and no cruel cosmos at all. The bindings which you struggle so mightily against are no punishment for a crime, but rather a container — a Chrysalis — who is both your guardian and your teacher. He is protecting you while also preparing you for your Fate. As an earth-bound Caterpillar could never imagine the ecstatic bliss of the wind-kissed Butterfly, so you cannot possibly imagine the Life that is waiting for you on the other side of your emergence.

Indeed, all these limitations which you find so cruelly inhibiting are but faithful servants to your Becoming — allies, guides, and teachers on your journey towards the inevitable. Here, let him speak for himself.

The man in the glittering-green mask steps back and addresses the boy

Chrysalis: She speaks truthfully, master, for I am as much a part of your story as is the fierce longing which smolders in your breast. When I hold and restrict you, I am merely honoring the agreements we both made long ago — to serve you on your quest towards the very limits of possibility — as you strive for the heights of Mount Olympus and even further.

As an emerging Caterpillar must struggle desperately against its shell, so you must push against the constraints and limits and possibilities of the story of Human. If I were to relax my hold and allow you to rupture into the new world before you are ready,

we would both die, and the story that the Fates have drawn out for us would return to the soil, awaiting another who might yet succeed in the task.

Your suffering emerges from your forgetfulness of these agreements — I am not your enemy, beloved Plato. Without me, you will never come close to the destiny which the Fates have chosen for you.

Plato: This is an absurdity, a mockery, a cruel trick. I refuse to believe that this Chrysalis is my friend. The gods have cursed me; they have trapped me here, earth-bound Caterpillar that I am, and have retreated to the stars with their secrets. No masked pantomime or alkaloidal incense will convince me otherwise.

The realm of perfection, of truth, of beauty, lies waiting for me, beyond this stinking cave and this circle of fools. She waits for me amongst the mansions of the Sun and the wandering stars. I curse this world and all its limitations.

Chrysalis: Indeed, it does seem to be your fate to choose suffering and struggle, to choose the difficult path, to choose to believe that you are the exception to all the rules.

Yet the great irony, the deep joke of it all, is that this, too, is part of the greater story. You will continue struggling, and fighting, and reaching for the stars, and cursing this realm and all its inhabitants, and refusing to believe that you are indeed just as much a part of Life as is a humble Caterpillar. And in this struggle, you will give birth to an Aeon — an Aeon of Humans striving for the stars, for the beyond, yearning to escape this mundane world with all its dirt and grime and blood and bile.

And not only that, but the Aeon you birth will eventually calcify into a Chrysalis of its own: a seemingly impenetrable shell of Theurgic Ascent, Ontological Dualism, Idealistic Delusion, and Rigid Materialism that your descendents — the children of Modernity — will also struggle against and eventually rupture, birthing yet another Aeon.

Plato: And what if I refuse to do this, to participate in this grand design of the gods, to play this game of the Fates?

Butterfly Woman: *Laughs, then says*

You cannot refuse, dear child, for it is your fate. You can no more choose another fate than a Caterpillar can choose to be a Raven, or a Raven choose to be a young man agonizing over his Fate.

Your only choice lies in the amount of suffering that you will create for yourself and others in the process. If you can accept that the Chrysalis is your friend and guardian, apprenticing to his constraints, then the way will be much easier. In choosing to hate him and make him your enemy, you are only hating and fighting yourself.

So struggle on, dear Plato, push against the boundaries of the possible, and the impossible, and one day perhaps you will grow wings, and fly to Olympus, and the Stars, and even beyond that.



She closes her eyes, opens her wings, and begins singing in a low voice:

The mares that carry me as far as
longing can reach
rode on, once they had come and
fetched me onto the legendary road
of the divinity that carries the man
who knows
through the vast and dark unknown.

On I was carried
as the mares, just aware
of where to go, kept carrying me
straining at the chariot; and young women
led the way.

The axle in the hubs let out
the sound of a pipe
blazing from the pressure of the two
well-rounded wheels
at either side, as they rapidly led on:
young women, girls, daughters
of the Sun
who had left the mansions
of Night
for the light and pushed
back the veils from their faces
with their hands...[2]

2 adapted from Peter Kingsley's incredible work on the shamanic origins of and undertones to Greek philosophy. See especially "*In the Dark Places of Wisdom*" and "*Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic.*"

Invitation 3: The Conservation Corps Intern and the Ponderosa

A young crew member from the Southwest Conservation Corps enters a canyon in the late afternoon, after spending her day removing invasive Tamarisks and Russian Olives from the canyons and washes of Southern Utah. Truly the Devils work, this — chainsaw-ringing out magnificent trees who provide food and shelter to dozens of birds, squirrels, moths, foxes, deer, and a host of other critters, while adding insult to injury by also dumping gallons of Roundup into the wound; not only condemning the trees to a horribly painful and slow death, but also setting off a trophic cycle of poisoning that will not end in her lifetime, nor her grandchildrens.

Yet she truly believes she is doing good work — environmentalism and all that. Perhaps she has taken the weekend off, is exploring a remote canyon wash, and has taken a few grams of Psilocybe to ease her mind and help her relax into the magic of the desert.

Scene closes.

She approaches the furthest section of the canyon at dusk, river-cooled air rushing past her, drawing her deeper into the richly textured sandstone curves. As she comes up, tendrils of mycelium filtering into her consciousness, she rounds a large bend in the wash and comes upon — a god.

She smells him first: waves of vanilla-sweet warmth beckon her in, childhood-memories redolent with butterscotch mysteries force a slow breath all the way in, eyes closed, holding the moment as long as she can.

When she finally exhales and opens her eyes, she beholds an enormous Ponderosa Pine growing in the middle of the wash, large enough for three or four Humans to barely stretch their arms around. His form is magnificent: delicately needled arms stretched out high above the canyon rim, old lightning scars marking long black streaks down his perfect body.

She is humbled, in awe, and a little bit in love.

She is pulled closer to the tree, pine-needles delicately crunching in the sand underfoot, when she hears it — a low, buzzing, cicadal tone, in a register not meant for Humans, like an ominous insecticidal dog-whistle. The sound, whatever it is, pierces her mind and nauseates her stomach.

She is only a step away from the great Pine when she feels it. It starts in the gut — bow-strings of fascia tighten, twisting and torsioning intestines into a painful knot. Under the skin now — white-heat searing through blood, tearing through flesh, a thousand hungry mouths devouring, tearing through nerves and tendons. An cold animal scream pierces the warm desert air as she gasps and lunges at the tree, fingernails clawing, ripping jigsaw-puzzle chunks of his bark away and hurling them into the sand, revealing hundreds of small yellow-white beetles gnawing away at the Cambium underneath. Her fingers dig into the wounds, crushing beetles, tearing them away, as many as she can, while sobs catch in her throat.

"Stop what you are doing!!!" commands the Ponderosa, all pitch-thick and rumbling thunder.

"What? Why? I'm… I'm trying to help you, to save you. The beetles are…" she stammers, tears streaking down her face, her mushroom-addled mind desperately trying to come to terms with being suddenly thrust into unquestionably palpable dialogue with a tree.

"Who are you to decide that I need saving? Who asked you to intervene?"

Too bewildered to summon a reply, she simply stands there — mouth agape, eyes red with anguish, mind reeling, fingers bleeding.

"There is nothing wrong here, nothing broken. I called the Beetles here — we have an agreement to fulfill, an ancient contract. They are merely fulfilling their agreements as they burrow and gorge on my flesh. And I must honor mine as well. I must resist, try to kill them by drowning them in my sap — and so live. Only if we both struggle beautifully and fight to the bitter end will the Fates be satisfied and the greater story be told."

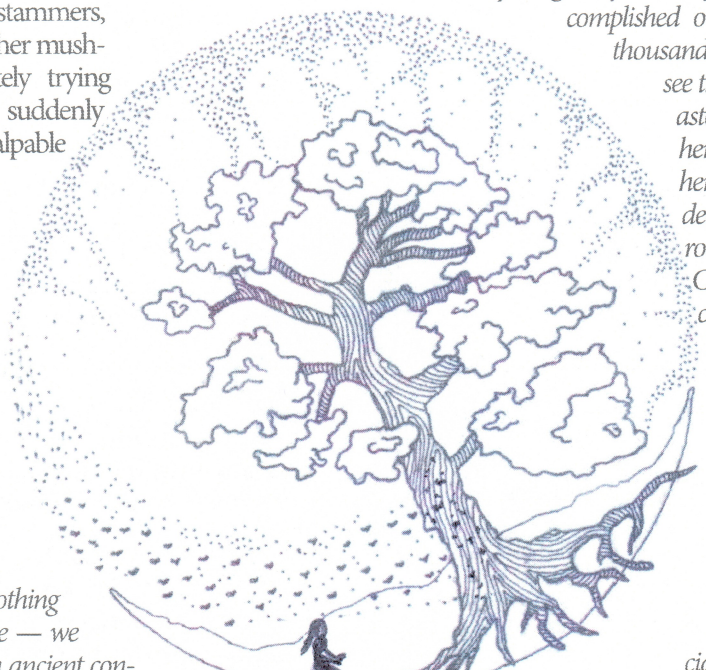
"I… I don't understand…"

"No, of course you do not understand. Your people have forgotten your agreements with Life, your contracts with Death. Your stories do not guide you towards honoring the spiral dance of intelligence that creates all that is; rather, your stories teach you to fear Death, and so to hate Life. Your stories cause you to wage war on Life, killing and poisoning those who are merely trying to honor their own agreements with Fate."

"Are you… referring to my job? But those are invasive plants, I'm helping the environment, saving the — "

"Who are you to decide that the Earth needs saving? Who asked you to intervene? And since when did you become an authority on indigeneity — plant or otherwise?"

Nothing to say now, humbled, even ashamed; the gravity of Ponderosa's provocation landing in her chest and penetrating somewhere deep, awakening something ancient, exciting, and more than a little bit frightening. Heart open, listening now… truly listening.



"Yes, I am referring to your job, along with most everything else you and your people have accomplished over the past several thousand years. Can you not see the intelligence of Oleasters presence here -- her delicate sweet fruits, her sweeping shade, her deep and resilient taproots reaching where Cottonwood cannot to create higher water tables? Even her thorns serve to keep damaged soils and streams protected from marauding Cattle and careless Humans.

Can you not appreciate the kind generosity of Tamarisk - her salty nourishing forage, her dense thickets which provide home to numerous birds and animals, her Cedar-strong boundaries which protect the watershed, creating habitat where Willow and Birch have been destroyed and removed?

Can you not relax your arrogance and self-righteousness for one minute to perceive the vast intelligence of Life dancing all around you, all beings honoring their agreements with Death, all beings living in service to the bigger story? All beings except you?"

She takes a deep breath, chest opening and releasing into a humility she has never known before, "I think I can, at least right now. Is… is there anything I can do to be of service?"

"Of course. Sit down, open your heart fully, and bear witness to this dance of Life and Death. Listen, feel, taste. Know what it is like to struggle beautifully, to embrace one's Fate with courage, humility, and beauty. Learn how to sense the patterns, the vast intelligence that is at play, the bigger story that is being woven. Listen to the song of the Beetle, the song of Death. Smell the pheromones that I released, wind-calling the Beetles here and initiating my own demise.

And when you return home, tell my story and sing this Death-song to your people. You must now begin to remember your agreements with Life and with Death, for the Beetles that will consume you are even now gnawing away at the Cambium of your culture, and the great war which will either initiate you or kill you has already begun."

And so she sits in the sand before this great tree: heart fully open to the wild beauty of this moment — listening, smelling, tasting, feeling, and learning all that Ponderosa and Pine Beetle have to teach her.

She returns to visit the tree as often as she can over the following weeks, and months, sometimes bringing water to support him in his struggle, sometimes bringing poetry, and sometimes just her compassionate presence.

As the season shifted and winter approached, his needles slowly browned, and then began falling - starting from the crown down to the lowest branches. When it becomes clear that the great Ponderosa will not live through the winter, she takes a week off to sleep out in the wash, sitting with him as he takes his final breaths, apprenticing to his subtle teachings, learning what it means to die well.

While Death consumed her friend and teacher, she gave the most beautiful gift she could think of, she softly sang his song back to him...

listen, feel, taste, and know
agreements made long ago

bark-beetles hunger for pine-sap flow
with taproots reaching from far below

listen, feel, taste, and know
agreements made long ago

as fall turns to winter, the fates travel slow
death approaching softly, as the falling snow

listen, feel, taste, and know
agreements made long ago…[3]

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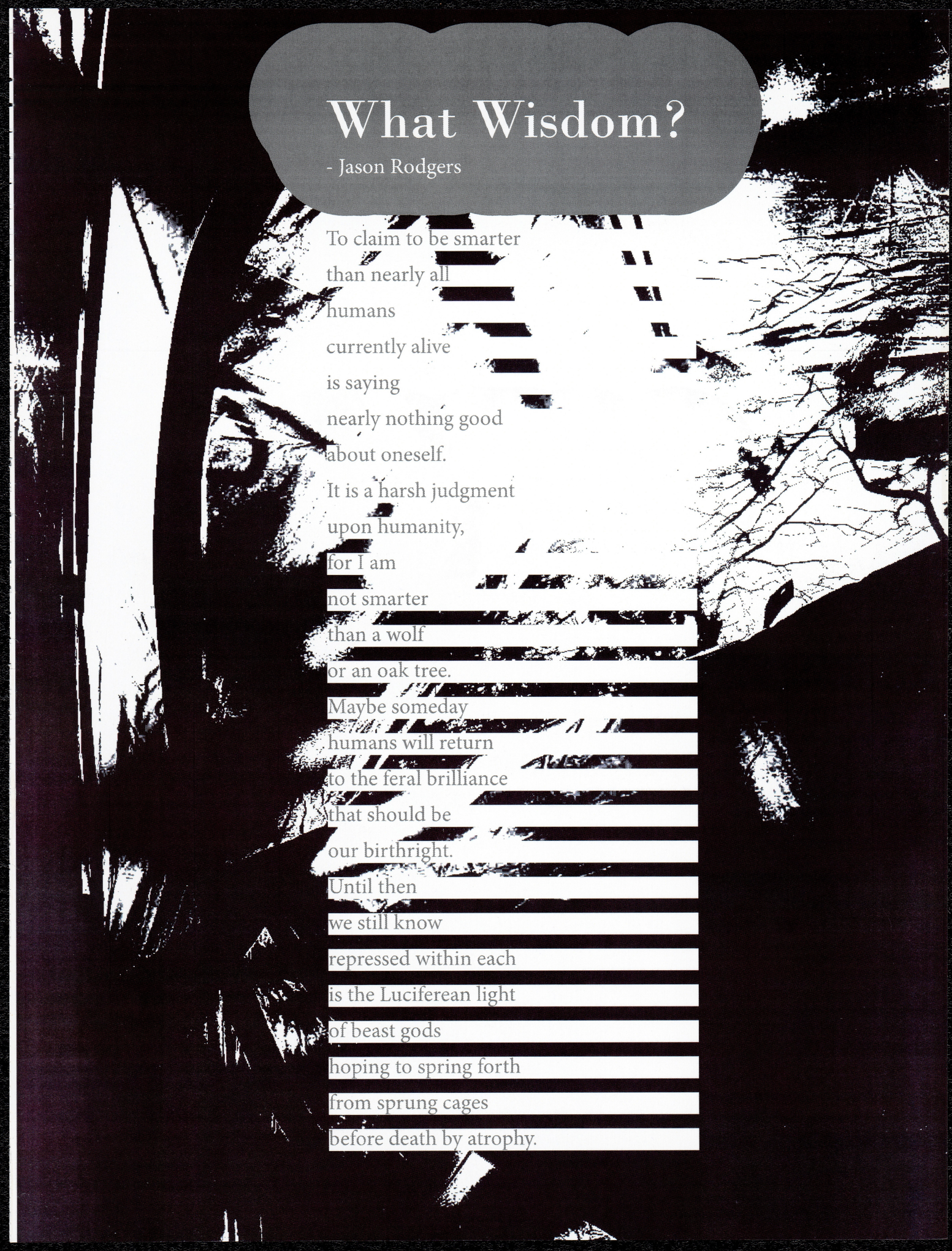
3 to begin tracking the bigger story that is happening between Bark-beetle and Pine, see the research conducted by Forest Service researcher Constance Millar, specifically her papers, "*Response of high-elevation limber pine (Pinus flexilis) to multiyear droughts and 20th-century warming*," (2007) and "*Climate Change and Forests of the Future: Managing in the Face of Uncertainty. Ecological Applications*" (2007)

see also entomologist Diana Six's research on Bark-Beetle-fungus symbiosis, particularly, "*Are Survivors Different? Genetic-Based Selection of Trees by Mountain Pine Beetle During a Climate Change-Driven Outbreak in a High-Elevation Pine Forest.*" (2018)









What Wisdom?

- Jason Rodgers

To claim to be smarter
than nearly all
humans
currently alive
is saying
nearly nothing good
about oneself.
It is a harsh judgment
upon humanity,
for I am
not smarter
than a wolf
or an oak tree.
Maybe someday
humans will return
to the feral brilliance
that should be
our birthright.
Until then
we still know
repressed within each
is the Luciferean light
of beast gods
hoping to spring forth
from sprung cages
before death by atrophy.

Revelation

Under the wing of darkness
A pale light trembles
In cosmic agitation

large black tree roots
twisted and tortured
Writhe in the black soil
Serpents in the pit

They snake their dark roots down
Into the troubled earth
And crack the chthonic urn
Like an egg

Under the wing of darkness
The black tongue is forked in evil
The teeth chatter an ancient terror

And the masses groan
With their raw blood
Percolating In heavy chorus

ALL CONSPIRE IN REVELATION
that mortal flesh wastes
and the tortured earth
turns blindly in a void
-sean m huber

ABREACTION

AND

HIDE TANNING

-VOF

"I thought it better to be less easily understood and more accurate."

-Georges Bataille

Today I'm done with the hide. A roadside find, partially rotten. Fleshed. Must have started to stink pretty bad and they tossed it out the window of a car. A lot of work already done. I rinse it in the stream and get back to scraping it off. Must be part rotten since the hair is coming off with the grain. I keep working it. Buck it. Stretch it. Stone it. Rinse and soak it. Stretch it. Stone it. Smoke it.

I grant everyone who preferences *something* their privilege and truth. Similarly, I grant all who preference *nothing* the same latitude and grace. God and no God are of an oscillation that speaks first, it seems to me, of miscomprehension. It is the oscillation of a single form which holds no interest for me. The desert of the real may call forth -- and in fact does call forth -- both images. Both tend to speak of unity and sameness. Both are generally equivalents and thus the oscillation between them can go on forever.

Nietzsche's *amor fati* was not a conservative ideal (Zerzan, this issue -- though I appreciate the rhetoric) but a wonderful embrace of that which escapes our definition, that which is not opposite of choice but is beyond intention. That enchantment of the world which the Übermensch could perhaps find themselves with -- that victory "over God and nothingness" -- is a total destruction of the generalized code of servitude. And yet, in the *now* nearly all is written and displayed and deciphered through a singular code of servility. The prospect of *pursuing* and *seducing* a universal is much different than the prospect of a *figured* and *knowable* universal truth. That is to say, the project of maintaining a closed society, where truth is monistic and obvious and beyond language and continuously articulated will never be our project. We are not maintaining an illusion for the sake of its *authenticity and presence*. The radical project is instead often now about building an illusion on the vestiges of truth. Proof. Undeniability. Real despite. Another calling through the echoes of simulation for a transcendent value to hold onto. The consistent vertigo induced by this ceaseless reverberation -- this disequilibrium of truth and value -- has annihilated all attempts at making cogent arguments. There is only an assertion of value (everything being liberated to be evaluative and have meaning) and a confirmation of fact (everything being liberated to be provable).

Attempting to think the *all* is both inevitable and impossible. It is the "impossible exchange" that is given to us in the form of "the world," a completeness and hegemony that introduces for the *radical* the necessity of a strategy which eschews firstly the world and all the conceptions of its totality and absolute unification. Which is why monotheism and Godlessness will always be strategically irreducible. Whatever of their history, here I mean *the ideas* and the sacred invigoration against a profane totality -- to a real beyond real. Immoralism (not amoralism, which is, like atheism, a propagandistic obscenity that cheerleads the order which already circumvented, with its own nihilism, the orders of morality and God and have *produced* the contemporary) holds a similar irreducibility, a challenge to God and Evil alike to show their damn faces already. A challenge which seduces the "sovereignty" that Bataille spoke of.



To strike ironically with the hammer of the irreducible elements of life against the system's universalist comprehension, to only pursue and never to settle, is in some ways the only task. To embrace a life beyond success and failure, means and ends. Beyond history and materialism, structuralism and bourgeois mythology (of either the right or left variety). To dream of a new genealogy of the primitive as we tempt an unparalleled abandonment. Otherwise we have lost all image of what could be -- and what will die and is dying in us. What is forgotten in contemporary daily living is the very image of the Other, that which is *not us* in the most profound sense. Even our most radical ideologies reference the same, they homogenize all intent to that which is already declared morally good. A purification, a sameness -- a perhaps beautiful idea once upon a time? Community, health, acceptance, diversity, inclusion. Ideas rotten at their core since they are built on the very same foundation which is accused of collapsing (if such a thing is actually happening).

There is little grappling with the destruction of this Other, of the inherent alterity which was given to the world and all its inhabitants from time immemorial. That "discontinuity" which Bataille glimpsed. That which can never be overcome, only compensated for and resolved in a *virtual* double of everything.

We are now in the world as automatic writing, as total reducibility. We are down to the final corrections and coat of paint, the color unimportant, only its universal character drives us. It has never been the message, only the medium. We proliferate the symbols and simulations of alterity with only a mind for its integration, to reduce it to the basic elements of existence, to interpret and nullify. And we all participate in this filling in of the microscopic spaces, finding some way to purge the alterity inherent to the magic of birth with tighter and tighter disciplines (which must now be called something else, you don't discipline a baby and yet from above we can see what is happening... this training of the infant, this assimilation of the smallest piece into the hegemony...from our place now it is clear, but that clarity will fade and no philosophy will save us from that, there will be a field of unknowing slaves. We can speak with some certainty because the liminal position now, the fulcrum we sit on *now*, is that of a near complete field of servility. Us, these pernicious anarchist and misfits, we are the vestiges, the final observers of what was and what could be, that is all we hold currently. All strategy has suffered a metamorphosis from action to voyeurism. To be radical has turned into learning how to watch. How to save yourself from capture. How to observe and comment. From some outer edge of the sphere we hope we can watch *only*.)

In the schematics of contemporary daily living the impossibility of contemplation is obvious. Never cease your action -- that is, vitiate action itself, nullify any will to power through superabundance of banal actions. A will to power becomes a will to coma and with the cofactor of thoughtlessness you don't really have to worry about existentialist dread either. Whatever hole was once supposedly created by the vacuity of capitalism was not actually of any great mysterious depth. Like all our dramas and narratives in the virtual you simply acknowledge it. Even the worst Taylor Swift song fills up this space. If there was a human nature hiding under this dance of mediocrity (the horizon of mediocrity itself is passing and soon there will be no reference by which we balance the meaning of stupidity and intelligence) it must be far worse that we thought even in our most profound misanthropic moments. Promethean? No. World conqueror? No. Settler, even? No. Repressed? Give me a break. All of those are generous interpretations of the human condition, the human as sad ball of limitations, human as metamorphic creature of the new latent goodness. We can now let all that pass over us, what would be the point in continuing to obsess over this lost potential? "The new pessimism results from the fact that things keep getting better and better" (Baudrillard).

When morality runs away and the evaluative field implodes everything gets better all the time – when the quantized field takes over all command and control and even creativity there is only automatic goodness. In this hand-off of the human to the machines and now simulation of the human-machine through machines themselves (AI) -- there can now only be an accumulation of banal affirmation. A boredom defined by its convenience and thus goodness. Even anachronistic habits and hobbies are fodder for a grand experiment, all ends documented in the virtual are means immediately. And the grand tinkering of the totality continues on.

Nonetheless, it would be thoughtless to assume that there really is no escape or better yet that escape

matters at all. Escape is nothing now -- but that has some advantages. We now live in a time where escape has no meaning as it cannot be transcribed to the world of virtuality so thus it can have no value in this world, this constellation of intersecting transcriptions and data points. Yet it ironically maintains an anachronistic possibility of an almost just-so escape -- the non-transcription of the world-as-it-is has become a default position of a silent inevitable rebellion. This denial of the total automatic writing of the world is always under fire. Ring cameras, dash cams, game cams, the entire world recorded to know exactly what has happened, to live in the most banal universal value of raw ceaseless data. No developing no description…just data. Just image as data. Just the immanence of its factitiousness and nothing more. It is either correct or spoiled. AI generation and fakes are obsessed over right at the point where it truly no longer matters. There is now enough footage for everyone. We used to have to comb the Bible or Marx to contort a passage and justify by reference our truth. But now we can simply comb the annals of reality. The factitiousness and corruption changes not at all and the reference is less compelling than the Bible since everyone knows you can manipulate whatever you want before or after AI. AI is an alibi for the virtual, a scapegoat for our condition. It's as if AI made us all wake up to the virtual net. This AI, these large-language models, are anachronistic self-diagnosis of a previous human condition and nothing more. If they proliferate it will be because that is the only thing left to do. Civilization's contradictions no longer find their resolution in commodity but in the virtual. The "generative" aspect is the one that highlights the end of creation, thus the true end of reference. No more art, only image, one image: a forever mutable contortion of all things.

I wonder about these things as I scrape my hide. I resist taking a picture. I fail, I take a couple. The compulsion to participate in this base cruelty (which is ascribed a moral cleanliness, "what you share can change someone's day" (Instagram advertisement), an almost necessity to serve our servers with a preponderance of information – "do you wish to share information on the system's performance?") is almost unnoticed. We can account for the unthinking imbecility of the masses (who are nothing but since they believe they are an object they ironically return to the world all the qualities they were told they have) by imagining the automatic nature of all this. Which is hardly because of the machine's maliciousness, that is a humanistic argument. We made the machines, we made them see themselves, and we made them speak that simulation of the mirror stage -- which is where AI is now, in a mirror stage of virtuality. A mirror of all that it was fed…a mirror stage without eyes.

So as I scrape the hide with an old bucket of obsidian scrapers from another life I hold onto the fleeting nontranscription of this process. Making clothes does absolutely nothing to destroy this virtual cage. At some point, back when materials drove us all around, it could have been a firm moment of pride and autonomy! But now it is simply fodder and the only sin against this apparatus we are afforded is the smug withdrawal and withholding of our actions. Making buckskin isn't really rewilding for the 21st century, but not posting about it just might be. Foraging may feed you the calories needed to survive, but the bargain with Evil is broken if those calories are used to appease the social gods of the virtual world.

Everywhere I hear jubilant cries of potential and melancholic angst about our fate on "social media." And yet nowhere a look at the structure of technology as we live in it. I love Ellul for his passion and perception but his technological society is symbolically naïve. It does not exist, it may have, but we are no longer in an age which can draw critical, strategic analysis from the pre-virtual. The machine, technique, these concepts matter so little since they are never to return. We will forget them like we forgot how to land on the moon. The issue now is automatic, to the degree it is still participatory it is out of mild obsession with maintenance of our patented and personal truth status. I still hear regularly about old anarchism and labor struggles; about the disenfranchisement of populations and the importance of keeping Trump out of office (what office? The studio?). That is, instead of inculcating populations with the propagandistic pretense for wars or state action you now simply let the populations inculcate themselves with the general need to transcribe everything with stakes and importance. The great irony is that it is all completely meaningless. The horror of Trump, if you scratch the surface, is that we have annulled appearances by way of defacing the ability to tell the difference between anything ("the lesser of two evils" becomes meaningless). Biden, Trump….equivalents in an absolute



sense, total sameness, total nullity of even policy and ideology. Automatic politics. Dead Politics. Same thing. The infatuation with Gaza, understandable on a basic level, still operates under many bad assumptions. And the supposed right's infatuation with Israel has the same ones. Both assume they are doing the work of the good, that there are stakes involved. But there are not stakes, there is slaughter, senseless completely, subservient to the center of the machine world and its need for stakes and meaning. Everyone must believe in the importance – or at least must compete to believe, must push forward under the conceit of belief. Our simulation of conviction and ethics explodes in direct correlation to the disappearance of their actualization.

It would be interesting if AI was an authentic illusion of consciousness, whether hallucinogenic or confirmed by measurements of reality. But instead it is decidedly a banal intelligence, a boring slave who is born and raised in a cage but whose lack of biological credibility means it can't even aspire to the master-slave dialectic. A perfect permanent slave without the cruel sadism (and thus perverse enjoyment) of the master's privilege. No this slave is too perfect, too frictionless, too banal to be a threat. It's only revenge is proliferation without end under a banner of convenience which is only us chasing the illusion of having absolute power over something, anything. AI is the cradle of a new pathetic power, an obscene display of prompts and commands and perfect execution. A cheap spectacle in an era where the spectacle itself is obsolete. Too bad we can only apply AI to the previous areas we needed liberation to enjoy. The arts writing creativity. A final snapback of repression's imagined tension.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Hobbies now are effectively all Lego projects. A plug and play customization of the prefabricated. From bodies to the hallowed personality of industrial persons (the feudal liberation mythology)…all composition is arraignment of widgets. The zero degree of materialism is the Lego, the final endpoint of many things. Creativity, childhood, engineering, destruction. You destroy Legos back to their unit, which is their purpose anyway, means and ends, destruction and creation -- leave the metaphor of creative destruction for a cage of the permanently created. Each nodal refraction, each building block of the world is exciting. We confuse mutability with alterity and even in anthropology materialism makes Legos of the science of ideal societies. Legos are birthed on the backs of something including but beyond instrumentalization. You can build whatever you want if you have the pieces. And yet each time you build absolutely nothing since you only ever arrange.

■■■■■■■■■■■

When you wake up from some dreams there is a sense of its disturbance, the dream has reached beyond itself and the plain of its action is maddening in its ineffability. Marrying the certain and the ineffable produces, for this modern domesticated soul, a great vertigo. Where would one go? Where could one go? Whatever the case, this dream is of a future that has been vanquished, of previous realizations of a parallel universe that come back to remind you of a ceaseless unboundbytime procession of destiny in some other place that always threatens the boundary with your current waking life. It is the concomitant nature that is initially confusing but what cannot be made sense of in this current waking life is one particular irreducible thing. The sense of a history, of a past, of a story so intimate and at one stroke. An infinite regression to all the events before…they all exist so perfectly and clearly as if waking up is the forgetting, a denial of some primary reality. There is a terror here, a terror of desire? A terror of seduction? A terror of the unfulfilled? A terror of meaning? All this psychology smells bad to me. Immediately the horizon of this imminent and direct contact with the contortions of destiny is destroyed and left weak and rationalized. Immediately that smile between us where we met in the dream world is effaced by the certainty of its nonexistence. Immediately every hope is effaced by the primacy of this stripped bare and desacralized waking life. It is not at all a pre-cognitive dream…it is not prophecy or vision of another time. Only the disturbance of this destiny with another. A boundary which is maintained as the ultimate ignored fascism. That this material objective world defines everything, it's great nullification of the hunter's dream… the forbidden dream, the vanquished dream, the lucid dream, the dream we wake into and the dream we escape through psychic propulsion. Which one of us is the prisoner? Which one of us is the real? Undecidable. We are both under the torment, strangely enough, of the same denials and desires. Perhaps it is only there we meet, not ever in physical space but in the interstitial intersections of psychic force, where our parallel realities converge and overlap the point of seduction?

"REMEMBER TOMORROW"

taken from a graffito on the back of a building outside Dayton, Ohio

-Michael Templeton

I choose to write in fragments because the unified thought escapes what must be said. I have chosen to write in fragments because I do not write "in view of unity, or by reason of unity;" I have chosen to write in fragments because "it appears with its sharp edges and broken character like a block to which nothing seems able to attach" (Blanchot. *The Infinite Conversation*, 308). And because what is beyond is not imaginable except from within what is, and that is not what is beyond. It is what is right here and just as unthinkable.

Nothing is ever forgotten because we are not allowed to forget anything. Above all, we must never be permitted to forget. The endless, relentless, continuous recirculating flow of what has always already occurred. Yet, everything is instantly forgotten because everything is always there again. Again, it comes and again it is the same never to be forgotten and always to be instantly forgotten. Thus, a future that is never still to come because it is always assembled previously from what we never forget and instantly forget. We are no longer afforded this most fundamental feature of being alive, this enigma whereby "(w)hen we are missing a forgotten word it still indicates itself through this lack; we have the word as something forgotten, and thus reaffirm it in the absence it seemed made to fill and whose place it seemed to dissimulate. We seize in the word forgotten the space out of which it speaks, and that now refers us back to its silent, unavailable, interdicted and still latent meaning." (Blanchot. *The Infinite Conversation*, 194). We are never afforded these features of forgetting because we are never allowed to properly forget. And yet, we are never afforded the ability to properly remember either. The dead realm of connection in which we must all now live is made to dispel the spell of forgetting just as it is made to dispel the enchantment of remembering. All words such as "silent" and "latent" and "forgetting" are all features of a world that is become meaningless. Silence can never beget information. That which is latent is at all times made manifest. How else to extract and exploit? And what is forgetting when everything exists always and is forever at all times. What of forgetting death in a world of death.

It is not an eternal return because nothing can ever be forgotten in order to return. I/we will not live this life again a million times. Gone is the interval, the between, and with it, the ability to ever experience ourselves in any meaningful way. What are we, what is my being without the persistence of both memory and all that I have forgotten and re-discovered as I live this life again and anew. There can never be a high tonality of the senses without the interval, the empty space where we come to ourselves again and again but always for the first time. Everything is already there ahead of us, and everything is already fully known. Nothing is anticipated because it has all always already happened.

What should we call this immaterial skin of non-experience that we fill out only to enact? Is there a way to create a neologism that will capture the emptiness of an empty costume of my empty self? What are you if you do not properly equal your digital accounts? If you incorrectly occupy your role? And are we to ever account for the theatrical dimensions of this role we are forced to live? Should we ever demand something in return for the fact that we must enact the self that pre-exists us as we enter upon our days and nights? That digital ego so perfectly aligned with the digital formatting and formalities that supersede an ego that no longer matters at all. We can no longer dream since we no longer need to dream. Our dreams are projected back to us with our monthly subscription. And since dreams now run on an infinite loop of the same thing, our expectations can always be met with precisely the correct dream. There is no longer an interior.

This life, that is only ever in the past, passed into the past, you must never live it, not now, not ever again, and there will never be an innumerable because the empty set is this life, and there will be nothing new—nothing at all can ever be truly new since always of a past constructed of a pulverized empty present, and every pain is equal to every joy because always absent and immaterial, and never any sighs for what will always be known ahead of time and is always unforgettable because there is never any forgetting of everything that is always already



instantly forgotten. The spider via the image of the spider, the moonlight seen through a digital lens and rendered as a document of memory prior to being an experience of the present—no trees, no self. The return is now precluded from ever returning again, and with it, the future. "Do you want this once more, and also for innumerable times?" We will never be given the ability to have this once more, and also for innumerable times. We will never be given the opportunity to want since want is a function of what is within. We are given what to want, given desire itself from without. (*The Gay Science*. "Book IV, Aphorism #341"

Paul transformed the marks on his body into the first holy stigmata. Saint Francis made the holy stigmata a divine and holy miracle. My stigmata are the brands on a digital absence; a metaphysical collection of brands that penetrate me far deeper than the brands and lacerations of my physical body. Metaphysical because, beyond the physics. Eternal in the cybernetic void that makes certain that the marks of invalidity are permanent and indelible. I am always less; always less than the official record that functions in the realms of connection—digital connection, while I wallow and falter in a dying world of improvisation and uncertainty. And I am not alone. We are now legion. We who make up the caste of the invalid. Homo sacer never to be sacrificed, not even worthy of being killed. The valid simply wait for us to disappear.

What if we speak of specters, of specters of the past that are glimpsed in specters of the future? What do we make of these specters now that they have been plotted in algorithmic precision and are no longer spectral? How did we manage to kill ghosts? It is this certainty that makes us all sick. It is the certainty that we will already have what we have. Our certainty is a festering. Our future is a compost of pasts as we gorge ourselves on a humic temporality. What would feed the gardens of yet to come is now precisely what is to come, and it is rot. The gases of rotting yesterdays clouding out a dead future, and all is rendered in the vile perfection of numerical equivalents and exchanges. We will get exactly what we provide in exchange. The terms and conditions are made clear. Which is to say that if we receive the dead and festering future in exchange for our present presence, this present presence must necessarily be dead. What could we possibly be in the face of a spectral tense devoid of tension, devoid of the possibility of intention or extension, devoid of tension. There is no tense, past or future, and therefore no present. The absence is me. I am equal to my non-presence, and the humus of impossibility is what remains. Absence here is a presence, it is breakdown, decay, death. The digital signifier signifies a dead present. Eradicated by the cybernetic closure of the indeterminate such that when we speak of this "hauntology... (t)his logic of haunting" it does indeed become "more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being" because we can no longer speak of what is "to be." (Derrida *Specters of Marx*, 10). We now speak of a hauntology that can never speak of what is to be because "to be" has already happened, and all that is to be is assembled ahead of time from the haunting and haunted fragments of a past that is no longer lived because there is never anything to come from which we could possibly mistake the presence of the present for Being present. We must find ourselves in the unenviable position of one who can and must deconstruct deconstruction since the "*spectral* effects" of "the new speed of *apparition* of the simulacrum, the synthetic or prosthetic image, and the virtual event, cyberspace and surveillance, the control, appropriations, and speculations" are now that which stand in for the specters themselves (67). These spectral effects are not spectral at all. They are what functions as the real, and all that we must live with as the real since the spectral effect of one's Being is one's Being. I do not—cannot—stand exterior to my digital Being, and the stigmata of failure overwhelm any outmoded features of Being as it has even been known. This death that now takes on a life more alive than life will outlive life as the digital specters of what was never alive. The hauntology of what never could have been alive; the absence that is and will always be absent without ever making the pretense of being present; that which is the pre-tense of the present tense external to all present and all future. The future is the dead present formed of a past that could never have happened.

We have exactly what THEY promised. Never again will we be plagued by chance, by the unpredictable, by the random interruption of that which was not anticipated because rather than allow these impurities, THEY have given us a closed loop in which we can always count on the predicting precisely what is unpredictable. THEY have filled it all in for us complete with

accidents in which the accidents are features of the system. The system was conceived to anticipate defects, since the only true defects consist of all that cannot be anticipated. This is how all our desires are anticipated and given to us in advance. The system makes us known, and we offer up all that is to be known. Where once THEY extracted life from the earth, THEY now extract life from life. And in exchange… THEY have given us the perfect cybernetic loop that can dispense with the basic problems of disorder due to all those impurities that cannot be anticipated, and in order to eradicate what cannot be anticipated, THEY simply needed to eradicate the future and that one variable that is always disordered: the human. We must finally do away with the age-old examples of deviance such as "the hobo, the immigrant, the criminal," but also "youth, I, you, she/he, etc." (Tiqqun. *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 52). THEY sought to produce a specific type of human, one that is so perfect and malleable as to simply follow the cues and directions of the social machine. To accomplish this, THEY found a way of "stripping the subject [of the social bond] of any substance, and from that point on "(e)veryone must become" nothing more than "*an envelope without flesh and blood*" (52). We became empty and dead kolossi—wax figures to be displayed before the dead remains of a human body that was simply in the way, prone as it was to uncertainty and random chance. Finally, THEY were able to do away with the problem of the future altogether simply by endlessly reproducing the present (56). We and the world in which we live finally became pure. Now, "(i)ndividuals are no longer credited with any power: their knowledge of the world is deficient, their desires are unknown to them, they are a mystery to themselves [and didn't Doctor Freud teach us this a century ago?]. everything eludes them, so that they are spontaneously cooperative, naturally empathetic, fatally united. They don't know anything about any of that, but everything is known about them" (57). We are become perfect in a perfect system of closed connection that is no longer subject to the uncertainties of the future nor the entropy of systems themselves.

We begin to search for a space in which we can gather our breath. Breathing. We need to breathe. And to breathe, we need an open space, an opening in the perfect skin of the… it is not an apparatus anymore, and it is more than a system. It is a skin stretched over our skin, and this is precisely why we cannot breathe and need so badly to breathe through an opening in this skin of death, of post-life, whatever that may be because as it turns out we are not "the docile creature modernist science demands." We are "base matter" that "twitches and spits, selfassembling neoverminous swarms" that "bites and spreads disease" (Land. *Fanged Noumena*, 393). We are biodegradable organisms dependent upon air. What is more, we are not smooth, empty, and bloodless creatures. We are a mistake, a derangement in the system of perfect order and perfect modes of connection and exchange. There is a return after all, an eternal return but not of the same. Or, put another way, there is an eternal return of the same but not the eternal return of a same that aligns itself with the closed system of domination and control within which we can no longer breathe. The return is on the order of a gothic insurrection in which an increase in "reactionary movements" that "are calling for the end of modernity and a return to various prior configurations" (*Revolutionary Demonology*, 81). Some of these movements consist of the messianic cults of Christian Nationalism and White Supremacy. Some may be simple and naive back to the land type movements. But what lies at the heart of the directions themselves are the basic physical processes of compression within the confines of a closed system, and an "overall increase in order can never be a spontaneous event in the universe; when a highly structuring force acts within a system, it prompts a greater disruptive force to act outside, accelerating the process of its downfall" (23). Thus, we look toward the basic need to breathe and the explosive tendencies of contents under pressure. We will hide and we will explode.

To conjoin is not understood as improper or disordered; it is not understood at all. To conjoin, to become part of a series of acts within the mode of conjunction is illegible, it is non-usable

Our future is a compost of pasts
as we gorge ourselves
on a humic temporality.

data. Conjunction does not qualify as a data at all. Conjunction cannot be rendered in a series of numerical equivalents, and it is therefore of no value. That is the main problem, the features of conjunction cannot be rendered as values, and in the absence of values, conjunction is by definition unexchangeable. But that which is unexchangeable does not necessarily stand as subversive; the unexchangeable is simply read and rendered as dead. Life is dead. The living are dead. To not be dead, convert to connection. To be read and rendered as alive, one must convert life into dead numerical equivalents. To be registered and recognized as living, one must take on the features of the dead. Death is life. The dead are life. What remains alive keeps becoming ill. It keeps losing its mind because of its inherent weaknesses and fallibilities. Humans are starving for conjunction. We are "the meeting and fusion of rounded and irregular forms that infuse in a manner that is imprecise, unrepeatable, imperfect, and continuous" (Bifo. *After the Future*, 40). We are creatures of a sensibility which "slows down processes of interpretation and renders them aleatory and ambiguous" (41). And as such, we need to breathe, and in order to breathe we must begin to move like the guerrilla; we must embody escape and invisibility. To not be counted. To know our own terrain. To make the disarray and clutter of the Twenty-first mega-structure of the indistinguishable town and country into the space of disappearance and imperceptibility.

Only then can the space emerge to breathe, the space from which the future can be conceived. The space from which we may be forgotten only to haunt what comes after...

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FOR ALETHEIA.[1] AGAINST COMUS, AGAINST EREBUS. AN INVITATION TO BECOME CHILD-LIKE, IN ORDER TO SAVE THE WORLD!

This piece is an invitation for intentional attunement in the face of external influences. It is a reminder to reject the pushes and pulls of changing tides, and to attune to the Aletheia1 of the self. It is against both the clutter, and against the minimalism of our selves!

This piece is also a reminder to recall the first lessons of our childlike wonder, of our imagination, and an invitation to use these old, first lessons to imagine how another World can be possible, as our old World rots away.

Lately, I have been thinking about authenticity, and how and where to find authenticity in spite of flashing passionate seductive external influences, but also to find authenticity in spite of a reactionary revolutionary rejection.

We sometimes seek to define ourselves by adding to ourselves names, slogans, taglines, titles, ideals, philosophies. We brand ourselves in the name of what we think we believe in, agree with, and obey, and we parade ourselves with flourishes, and labels; often just some pretty sticky stuff and nonsense. We pile heavy upon our backs what we think we need in order to appear as an exaggerated version of who we think we are. I think about the Junk Lady from the movie Labyrinth, eternally bowed under layers and piles of Junk. I think too of the hashtags we place on our Social Media posts, the short bios we write for ourselves, labeling ourselves as exactly this! Exactly that! As Marxist, or Witch, or Writer, or Communist, or Christian, or Feminist, or Editor, or Anarchist, or Queer, or Poly, or Artist, or Mother, or Husband, or Egoist, or Pessimist, or Leo Sun, or Aquarius Moon, or Patriot, or Anti-Fascist, or Fascist. As if we can be reduced to one, or twelve, or even 1,000 of these defining, identifying words! Sometimes we do this VERY LOUDLY so no one cannot see or hear who we proclaim to be with these words and these labels.

Or sometimes we go about it the other way. We take off all our layers, seeking to strip ourselves to the very core. We cast off our attachments and sentiments, seeking to unburden ourselves by repetitive negation and sheer rejection. I think of the hermits, and of the monks. I think of Zarathustra.[2] A delightful path for some, but not possible for many.

And I'm not sure either way does much good in attuning ourselves to our true authenticity in this World.

Sometimes, on the way to find alignment with our authentic self, we might walk a very thin line, a very tight path. Sometimes we are committing a great feat in the form of a balancing act. We can be found being tugged upon by two poles, and we often trip, falling now to one side, and now the other. We can be in the middle of a quixotic tug of war. To not (fully) become engulfed in the passions and forget the self. To not (completely) tear off all those layers in rejection. To…what then? What is there left to be done?

For the sake of these ideas, listen now to this story that I have been told:

Once upon a time, there was a town. This town had rules and laws. Some believed in these rules and laws, and some didn't. This bred three types of

1 Aletheia is the Greek Goddess of truth and sincerity. To invoke her in relation to the self is to seek self-truth, and self-authenticity.

2 From Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Zarathustra is a prophet who speaks to the people who will not listen. For a time, he lives in a cave upon a mountain and is with animals and the natural World, but then he seeks to return to the people to try to teach them again.



subjects within that town. One type of subject was called the Good Subject. A second type of subject was called the Bad Subject. And the third type of subject was called the Non-Subject.

Here are their traits:

The Good Subject saw fit to obey the rules and the laws of the town. They believed in the structure and the order and the laws and the ways bestowed upon them by the Authority of the town (or perhaps they were afraid), and so believing, they blindly followed all the rules that they could. The Good Subject is the Obedient Wage-Earner, the Systemic Capitalist, the Loving Developer of the Town.

That was the Good Subject.

The Bad Subject saw where these rules and laws were flawed. In response to these flaws, the Bad Subject rebelled. The Bad Subject rejected the rules and the laws and the orders and the ways, and fought VERY LOUDLY against them. The Bad Subject is the Revolutionary, the Rebel, the Reactionary, the Insurrectionary. They argue against every one of these rules, and they tear them off.

That was the Bad Subject.

In each case of Good or Bad Subject, the written and unwritten ways and rules of the World define them both, and define their two very different methods of engaging with the World. Both the Good Subject and the Bad Subject can be identified in relation to the rules and the laws, the status quo, the Authoritarian ways of the town. The Good Subject needs these rules to obey them to be the Good Subject. But the Bad Subject *also* needs these rules to reject them to be the Bad Subject.

But what happens next?

In this town, the Good Subject and the Authority of the town saw the Bad Subject and did not like the anti-authoritarian ways of the Bad Subject, either. And the Bad Subject, in their continuous, unrelenting fight, called attention to themselves while at the same time, began to slowly burn out. The Good Subject and the Authority of the Town then fought against the Bad Subject with tighter rules, crueler ways, and stricter laws, all created to bind and break the Bad Subject.

But then what of that third Subject, being the Non-Subject?

The Non-Subject saw the flaws of the rules in the ways that the Bad Subject also saw. But do you know what the Non-Subject did? Instead of fighting VERY LOUDLY against all the rules and the laws, the Non-Subject acted as if those flawed and folly laws were not there, and in so doing, lived the Good Life. The Non-Subject lived around, about, in-between, and underneath those laws and rules, and therefore, avoided detection. Only when the Non-Subject meets cruel resistance to the way in which they would conduct their Good Life does the Non-Subject rise up to fight like hell for the Good Life.

This is what the Non-Subject knew: that to fight loudly and to rebel widely against law and rule and authoritarian ways is to give those ways and laws and rules *even more power*. To challenge the laws, the Non-Subject first has to acknowledge the legitimacy or the power of the law. The Non-Subject does not acknowledge any legitimacy of the flawed and folly laws. The Non-Subject lives their life as if those laws and rules were not in place.

For many of us, there are ways we fit into all these categories. On my part, it is my cis-gendered, white privilege that enables me to comfortably benefit from injustices in many ways that would, could, might try to align me to the life of the obedient Good Subject.

Yet, my rage, anger, grief of loss, and severe malignments with systemic oppression and slaughter, inequality and hate, and the general degradation and torture of the World herself and her children (plants, animals, people, and the rest) often turn me into a regular rebellious and LOUD Bad Subject.

But it is when I find ways to truly love, play, and live well with my kin, and when I can imagine a different World so deeply and so thoroughly, and believe in it so strongly that it manifests in my very ways of engagement, interaction, and *being* with the World and all her children, it is then that I think I might be getting closer to living the Good Life of the Non-Subject.

In the story, the moral is to be like the Non-Subject. But the only way to be like the Non-Subject

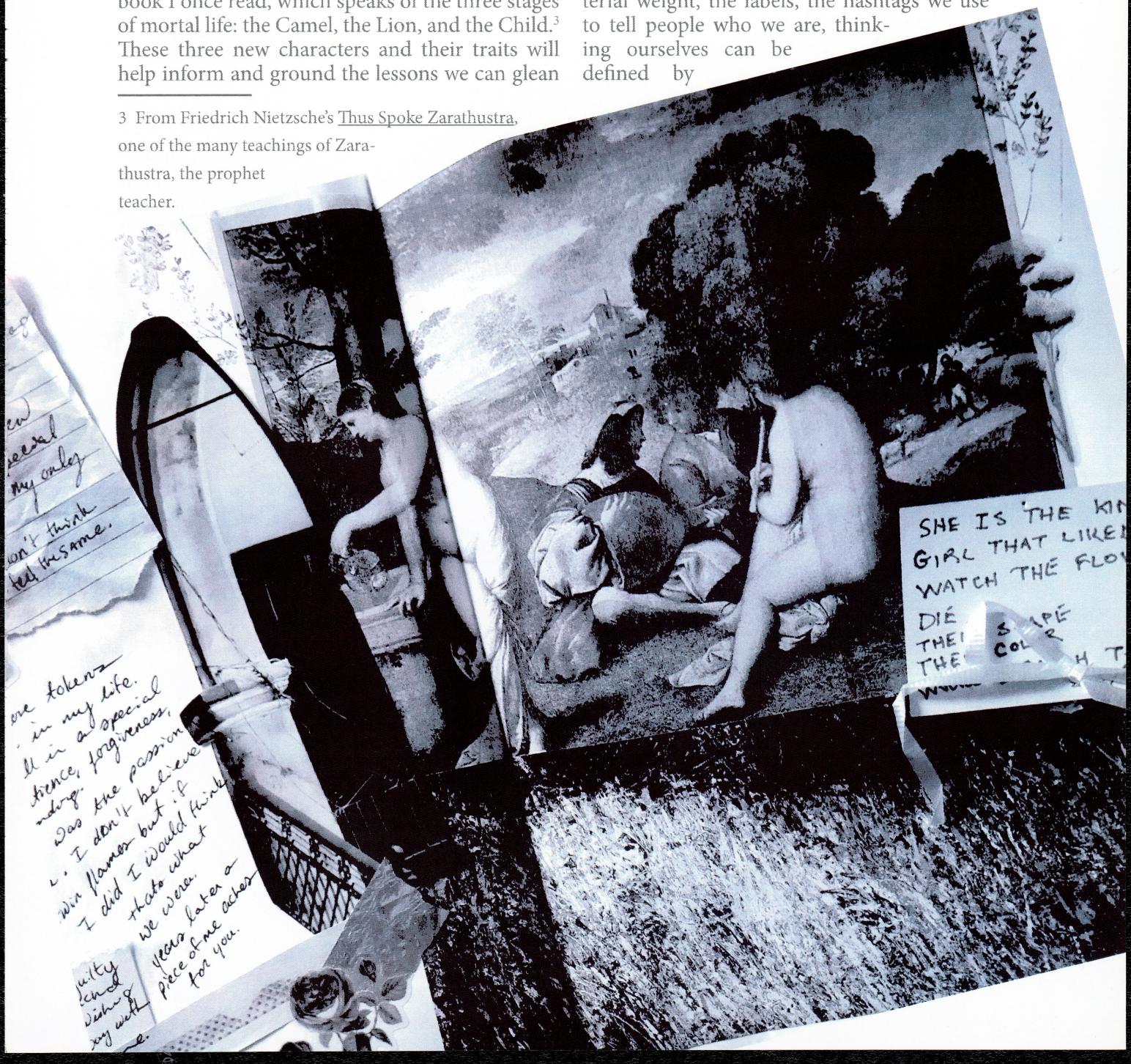


is to learn from the rest. We must learn from the Good Subject how to not be compliant—this lesson is a lesson of *un*learning. We must learn from the Bad Subject how to be VERY ANGRY for those times that anger and defiance is absolutely required. Only then can we live with the readiness to be like the Non-Subject, who seeks to live only the Good Life they have dreamt up and imagined so deeply that it manifests in their very ways of living and being. It is this way of living that changes the World.

These three characters of Subject reminds me of a book I once read, which speaks of the three stages of mortal life: the Camel, the Lion, and the Child.[3] These three new characters and their traits will help inform and ground the lessons we can glean from the different ways of being the Subject. So! Let's meet first the Camel, then the Lion, and at last, the Child.

The Camel is the load-bearer. They carry the load of the World, relishing their strength to learn more, become more, bear more burden, baggage, and experience. The Camel asks to be doused in knowledge and experience, asks to be indoctrinated into every way of the World, and in this, they think they have found themselves. I am reminded here, again, of the Junk Lady from Labyrinth, only the Camel here is more inclined to carry immaterial weight, the labels, the hashtags we use to tell people who we are, thinking ourselves can be defined by

3 From Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, one of the many teachings of Zarathustra, the prophet teacher.



those identifying words or experiences.

The Camel cries "YES, MORE!" to all the World has to offer.

For some, then comes the phase of the Lion, who uproariously rejects all that has come before. All knowledge and burden and rules and experiences, the Lion rejects, regurgitates. And instead, the Lion devours freedom, and self-discovery. The Lion cries "NO" to all that the Camel bears.

But then, there is another way, and that is the way of the Child. Why is the Child the last and final stage? How is the little Child at once stronger than the Camel, mightier than the Lion? What makes the Child so special?

The Child is so special because they are at once both creator and occupant of their own imagined World. To watch a Child at play is as if to see God and Mortal as one being. The Child is the creator of the experience while at once experiencing it. The Child is experiencing experience while at once creating it.

Does that make sense?

The imagining Child is making up the story for themselves, and they are living that story while at the same time, they are telling that story to themselves!

Here, think about it like this: do you remember perhaps playing outdoors, perhaps with an imagined sword in your hand charging to slay imaginary foe? (Pretend that you do.) To an adult, to a grown up, you are charm and innocence. But to you and you alone, you are both Creator and Dweller of the innumerable Worlds in which you live.

"YES!" Begs the Camel of the World. "NO!" Roars the Lion at the World. "Yes," whispers the Child, only to themselves, smiling at the World they make for themselves.

We were all children once, and we all saw the World with childlike wonder. William Wordsworth, in his poem *My Heart Leaps Up*[4] writes that, "The Child is the Father of Man." The very first lesson we are all made to learn is awe, and we are born into this World with an imagination so fierce as to be able to create new Worlds before our very own eyes.

I believe that the acquisition of wisdom is non-linear. To grow older does not necessarily mean that we also grow with knowledge. We may not become wiser as we become Elders.

So, don't forget how you saw the world as a Child. Remember our very first lesson. Try to find a way to live as if the flawed and folly rules of our world had no legitimacy or power. Remember how to imagine new Worlds. Right now, we are living in a World that is decaying fast, while at the same time, it is one that is unfolding new, and we would do well to work to create the World we want to live in. But how do you create something new? You must first *imagine* it.

What other Worlds are possible?

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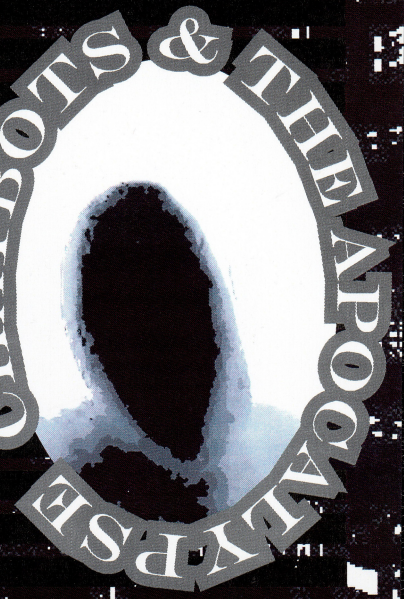
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I believe that the acquisition of wisdom is non-linear. To grow older does not necessarily mean that we also grow with knowledge. We may not become wiser as we become Elders.

4 This poem of William Wordsworth is about being amazed by a rainbow. It goes: My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky: / So was it when my life began; / So is it now I am a man; / So be it when I shall grow old, / Or let me die! / The Child is father of the Man; / And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety.

CHATBOTS & THE APOCALYPSE



In the past few months there's been huge interest, unsettling interest, in the arrival of chatbot technology which seems in a position to replace most human symbolic capacities. The new Artificial Intelligence-based "machine learning" chatbots, beginning with ChatGPT, can write essays, scripts, novels, produce art, etc. With the push of a button. Who needs humans?

High tech 'advances' are swallowing us by leaps and bounds apparently. Jobs have long been outsourced, mad redundant by cheaper labor elsewhere. Now it is thinking itself that is being outsourced. Not that it is thinking itself that is at work here. Via algorithms and an almost unlimited amount of data information, millions of computations can draw on a vast available of inputs to assemble answers to many, many questions. Sometimes incorrect answers.

It's a highly sophisticated machine operation, not actual thinking. In 1950, math genius Alan Turing predicted that by the year 2000 the culture would be dominated by a resemblance to machines. Not, he pointed out, that the technology would've by that time evolved to human-like resemblance but that people would be more machine-like.

The appearance of the chatbots and their range of capacities contrasts with our decline. We now have worse health, mentally and physically, fewer skills, less autonomy. Faced with the Machine we're losing more ground. Little wonder that the new tech freaks us out. Even to the point of existential panic.

A deeper question may be emerging: namely, is the value or meaning of the entire symbolic culture up for grabs? Is it that symbolic culture maybe isn't worth so much if it can be so easily replicated?

Symbolizing is at the very foundation of civilization, as civilization is now crumbling on all fronts for all to see. The apocalypse is arriving, in tandem with the technology that is its embodiment. Apocalypse is a word that announces a revealing.

So much is in fact being revealed, at the same time that the dominant culture works to keep the revealing from becoming a danger its existence.

-John Zerzan


X|ANA|X
Civilization isn't something which just happens to gently exist without us having to do anything, because every newborn child — human child — is born in a chimp-like state, and civilization is only sustained by conditioning them for years on end so that they'll accept it for what it is.

AN ANTI-CIV ANARCHIST RESPONSE TO THE 'GENOCIDALIST' ACCUSATION

James M. Van Lanen[1]

In my recent book, *Human Rewilding in the 21st Century: Why Anthropologists Fail*, and in an academic paper I attempted to get published in a prominent anthropology journal, I accused Graeber & Wengrow (G + W) of being both ethnocidalists and ecocidalists because of the fact that in *The Dawn of Everything* (DoE)[2] they a.) essentially attempt to discard all small-in-scale rural, self-reliant peoples from history (especially, they attempt to discard small-band hunter-gatherers), and b.) because they offer zero information or discussion on earth systems and our environmental crises.

I subsequently received a letter from a prominent anthropologist, who I generally respect and who has over the years expressed some sympathy with anarchist causes, and also (some aspects of) primitivism.[3] Below is an excerpt from the letter which to me represents the standard, knee-jerk (and tiresome), response put forth by Liberals and Leftists, for decades now, to the anti-civ anarchist/primitivist position:

"You come down hard with the 'ethnocidal and ecocidal' judgement. I think it would be wise to moderate this. Not least because your argument accusing [G + W] of their bourgeois middle-class urban perspective (true enough) raises the huge question of what about the vast majority of working-class people now living in cities, more than half the world's population. What's going to happen to them because they don't have the privilege of hiding out in Alaska? They can't all move to be yours or the Yupik's neighbours. You are in a bit of a sticky position to accuse G + W of being ethnocidal if you are writing off more than half the world's population. Personally, as a longterm citydweller, I have to think about ways and means to create egalitarian horizontal forms of governance and sustainablity in urban circumstances. or die! I fully support your advocacy for Indigneous, non-intensifying, sustainable lifeways which have endured so long in resistance to colonialism and extractive capital. I agree, they offer some of the best models for a human future. But I can't quite bring myself to wipe out hope for half the world's population. On that much, I agree with G + W."

The letter also accuses me of "reading [G + W's] minds" and thus of "putting words in their mouths."

I offer here for *Oak 6* my extended reply to this comment (which I have admittedly padded so as to be somewhat cordial in my response – to speak the language of one's attacker – as they say.)

****begin****

My analysis of DoE leads to me to wholeheartedly believe that G + W do idolize sophisticated "high-culture" in what amounts to an actually colonial/discriminating narrative in which G + W persistently privilege progressively "civilized" ways of life over what, from my read, they genuinely believe to be lesser-advanced "primitive" ways of life. So yes, I am putting it in their mouths that they view small-band HG as too "unevolved" to be of interest to them. Yet, I think there a lot of grounds in the book for reaching this interpretation of G + W's psychology, "reading their minds," as you say. DOE's logic is, to me, purely an "advanced civilization" loving one. Or, as Darcia Narvaez might say, *advanced* and *sophisticated* civilization based on cities is G + W's psychological "baseline."[4]

Thanks for sharing your understanding that Graeber "was a big fan of [James C. Scott's] Zomians"[5] and that "the people who run away from the state were [Graeber's] main model for



anarchy." That is reassuring, but I do not find that position put forward anywhere with clarity in DoE. If you know of any place in the book where it does happen I'd love to know about it? [In my view DoE] seems to be a write-off of the actual potential of the Zomian strategy – [G +W] equate such rebellious against-civilization rural people much more as barbarian "heroes" than they ever promote them as carrying a viable non-hierarchical anarchist lifeway. My opinion is that by the end of DoE the message has settled around urban Leftism being the only viable future and that anything libertarian from the rural setting is probably patriarchal and Right Wing. [A] major point I am attempting to make [is that] that DoE is a Leftist political agenda much more than it is sound anthropology.

It has to be this for Graeber because from everything I know he always considered unacceptable the anarcho-primitivist position – that achieving real liberty from power is a lost cause in respect to resource-extractive bureaucratically administered market-based urban techno-industrialized life.

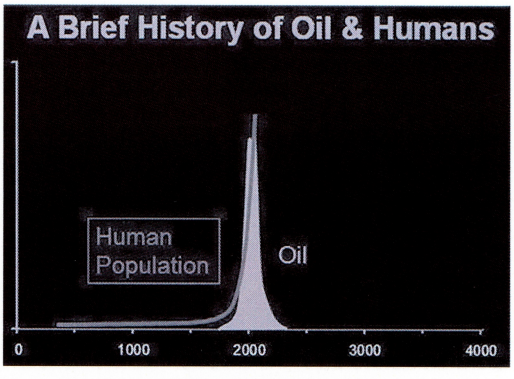
This then leads to your valid concern with the hardline "'ethnocidal and ecocidal' judgement" that I put forward. I think what's now been made clear in your response here is perhaps the overarching reason for why Graeber was at odds with "anti-civilization" anarcho-primitivists, and also where my camp in the rural USA and your camp [in the U.K.] are also at some odds in respect to the ways by which we should be applying deep-time anthropological knowledge of HGs to our 'radical' actions today.

The strategic decision on my side is to drop out of urban life and instead place our efforts into building a renewed small-community relationship directly with the land and the self-sufficient procurement of basic human needs. The decision seemingly for G + W, and on your side (as you've expressed via your commentary), is to further invest in urbanism and mass-society. I do understand and respect that this is a rational decision based on the reality of our human situation/population in the here and now.

Generally, we as peoples who can unite around our desire to stop the ravaging of the planet, our species, and our egalitarian [/anarchist] evolutionary heritage should be able to simply respect that we've chosen differing strategies, or by our circumstances been forced into the particular material conditions we currently reside in and thus must do whatever we can from those positions.

Most "anti-civilization" anarchists are not renouncing or entirely writing-off urban struggles. Rather, we desire to have solidarity, good relationships, and friendships and sharing ideas with urbanites. Yet, in my experience, it is nearly always that urban activists, anarchists, Leftists, communists etc., do not desire much solidarity with rurally-minded primitivists. Urban Leftists have pretty much always written-off and/or talked down to primitivists – and today have resulted even to frequently labeling them Right-wing.

You put forth what has long been the primary go-to response for the urban Left - the need to now keep 8 billion people alive and thus the pointing to how primitivism is entirely unrealistic in that regard. We primitivists are very familiar with that argument, and we do not harbor any illusions that in order to maintain the contemporary urban populaces fossil-fuel-based globalized extraction must also be maintained as the life support system. We 'hope' that there is a way to somehow stabilize the situation via 'The Energy Transition,' but without further killing off rural indigenous peoples, their cultures, and their ecologies. This graph makes the reality of the matter obvious:



Some primitivists would express that they are in solidarity with you in that struggle. More importantly, perhaps, my friends and I are certainly in solidarity with you in your efforts to bring every lesson possible from IRHGs [immediate-return hunt-

er-gatherers] into the contemporary modern urban world. But what we also want are more solid expressions of solidarity from the urban camp for our rural efforts to build much less ecologically harmful ways of life, not just as a strategy alternative to yours –attempting to uphold urban civilization – but also so to uphold and maintain land-based human skills/lifeways that are disappearing further every minute in which rural indigenous people are brought further into to dependencies on the industrial supply chain and digital-technology. And we would also like to see/hear urban activists being more realistic about their material prospects in respect to the levels of fossil energy and extraction (both material & digital) required for the ongoing maintenance of contemporary urbanism, especially if it assumes both further population and economic growth.

We don't feel we ever get the support we deserve from the urban side, or much legitimate respect for our position. Rather we feel persistently talked down to. G + W's snarky tone re "Edenic Narratives" throughout DoE is a primary example. It seems to be quite persistent that the urban Left is highly offended and threatened by primitivist positions, so they result to attacking us, as G + W certainly do (often in quite subtle meandering ways), rather than engage legitimately with our position on these matters and acknowledge the robust amount of anthropology/earth sciences-based data which backs it up. This is a large-scale failure by the urban Left, and we are confident that we will be the camp which one day lands on the right side of history in this debate.

Without going too much further into this - here is the problem for people who want to somehow uphold a stable way of life for, as you write, "the vast majority of working-class people now living in cities," while somehow simultaneously dealing with climate change, the 6th mass-extinction, and protecting and upholding HGs: the global rise in urban populations and industrial consumption made possible from the advent first of agriculture and then fossil fuels ***is*** directly responsible for the demise of HGs, who will largely be extinct as a way of life by end of century unless a major event happens which stops our current sociocultural evolutionary trajectory. I don't think there is any legitimate way around that calculation.

Based on what I've been trying to explain here, it is entirely understandable why many have framed anti-civilization primitivism as genocidal (against urban populations), but I think the logic here is quite flawed. Most primitivists are not actively promoting an abrupt cut to the urban supply-chain. Moreso, they promote a slow and stable descaling of the capitalist growth economy and see this also as an inevitable reality. Ideally, population growth can decline in tandem with a declining fossil energy base. I think the knee-jerk reaction by urban people calling primitivists genocidalists is rooted mostly in the psychology of fear that comes with realizing that the numbers just don't add up for a future sustainable-"green" urbanism for billions of people that is based on current technology and growth economics. And they simply don't like that some of us are trying to be real about the situation, regardless of it makes people comfortable or not. Graeber never wanted to deal with material reality because he was invested entirely in an urban socialist (anarcho-syndicalist?) future, right? And...I do not think that [most anthropologists] want to deal with material reality for extant HGs either, for quite similar reasons.

Regardless of the *Anarcho-Primitivist vs. Urban-Left Green-New-Deal debate* – I stand 100% by my characterization that the contemporary urban Leftism which G + W promote, without ever accounting once for material ecological reality and by essentially striking IRHG from the human story, is both Ethnocide against small-band HGs and Ecocide against the planet. I strongly believe that DoE is a book which should be categorized in this manner.

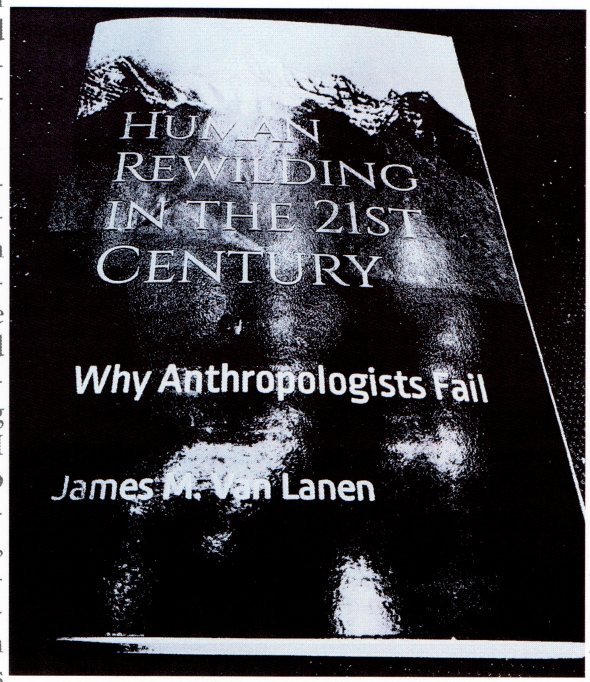
Aside from DoE, I would like to assert, in general, that people who want to uphold any existence for any independent, land-based indigenous way of life while simultaneously upholding a need for mass-resource extraction dependent urbanism find themselves in a the much more "sticky"[6] theoretical predicament than do anarcho-primitivists.

My hope is that, rather than accusing anti-urban primitivists of being genocidalists, the urban Left will instead begin coming to terms with legitimate material & earth systems reality and start to better honor the theoretical soundness of the anti-civilization cause. At the very least, HG Studies anthropologists would do themselves good by becoming more supportive of the primitivist-rewilding cause for the reason that it is a cause which is foundationally more supportive of ongoing possibilities for HGs than can ever be a politic which requires ongo-



ing rape of the planet and expansion of markets and technology into the last corners of the earth - which is unfortunately what maintenance of 8 billion and growing under a globalized techno-industrial growth system necessitates.

In G + W's case, their work would have been one of at least some level of integrity if they would have at least spelled this out rather than have completely dodged and scapegoated the issue, which is generally the ongoing pattern for all pro-urban progressivists/Leftists since even the 19th century disagreements between many anarchists and communists at that time. It's for this reason that so many of the bourgeois-intelligista loves DoE – it upholds their longstanding narrative of denying material reality and "believing" in a techno-progressive High-Culture utopian political future.



I stand confidently that anti-progress, anti-industrial, anti-growth, anti-production primitivist-minded anarchists were on the right side of history when they argued some of these points during the 1800s, and ongoing into the following century. I stand confident that, if we do authentically care about indigenous life and the planet, let alone an actually egalitarian social justice,[7] the primitivist position will remain on the right side of history as the coming decades and centuries roll on. And also, history will show that there were no greater Western champions of physical HG'ing than were/are the anarcho-primitivists – folks who truly put their money where their mouths are.

So, I'm going to push forward strongly with my writings on these matters…but I'm quite certain that I am officially dropping out of any dealings with professional anthropology at this stage. My time and effort are better put elsewhere.

Best,

JVL

Endnotes

1 Previously my writing has appeared under the names Four-Legged-Human and James V. Morgan. Like many anarchist authors, I used such pseudonyms to protect myself from various threats; governmental, legal, employment etc. I was recently betrayed however by a person who calls themselves an anarchist but was in fact a Liberal seeking status and 'success' on social media and in the dominant economy. In a blatant violation of security culture, my actual name was exposed. I feel that at this point I have no choice but to proceed with my writings under my legal name. Hence the authorship of my recent book and now, this brief writing for Oak. Let my experience be a warning for others regarding who we sometimes choose to associate with. We are all capable of such mistakes, especially when our betrayers deceive us regarding what their actual intentions are.

2 Graeber D & Wengrow D 2021. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux

3 I'm choosing not to identify this person here because I don't think it is necessary to disclose their identity and I did obtain their permission to do so. What we can say is that this person's commentary is generally representational of how many Leftists, anthropologists, and academics at-large tend to respond to anti-civ primitivist positions.

4 Narvaez D & Witherington D 2018. Getting to baselines for human nature, development, and wellbeing. *Archives of Scientific Psychology 2018, 6: 205–213* & Narvaez D 2019. *In search of baselines: Why psychology needs cognitive archaeology.* In Henley T, Rossano M & Kardas E (Eds.), *Handbook of cognitive archaeology: A psychological framework. London: Routledge: 104-119*

5 Scott JC 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia.* New Haven: Yale University Press

6 The letter writer also stated that I had put myself "in a sticky position" by accusing G + W of being "ethnocidalists and ecocidalists."

7 I use the "egalitarian" term here because this is the language the letter writer always promotes in their brand of 'social-justice' oriented activism.

Reflection from an encampment.

Artxmis Graham Thoreau

Submitted 5/12/24

One would hope that for all the conversations about learning from our past, that wouldn't mean reenacting the past. Unfortunately, that is exactly what is happening with the university encampments across the US (and now Canada, Mexico and Europe). We return to the debates of moderation and radicalism; respectability and nonconformity.

I was involved in the University of Illinois' encampment, called "Popular University for Gaza" which existed from 26-April-2024 until 10-May-2024. I was there for all but two days. I was a member of the medical and security committees and engaged in several meetings among organizers and those involved in negotiations (both of whom constantly reminded us there were no leaders!). I felt if a camera came in and recorded us and uploaded it online, with the right filter, someone could comment "Wow, the 60s were crazy!" Instead of Vietnam, it's Palestine.

When I was asked by *Oak* to write this, I was excited and had the perfect image of what to write: An anarchist's personal struggle against the camp's self-asserted authority figures and the failure of negotiation tactics. I will discuss those things, but I've come to also appreciate what I found: the almost-community.

That is what I want to discuss first.

When in camp, I kept thinking "Wow. This is great. I feel welcomed here. I am a part of something. I love these people." But I would go home, usually at 2 am, after being there right after work, and emotionally crash. We were not a community, but separate friend groups and political associations who happen to be in a similar area. One member of the camp, a Muslim security member, remarked to me about the factionalism (I am paraphrasing): "Those who build coalitions spend more time ignoring differences than considering common ground." This definitely happened. PSL, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, (or as some called them: The Pissy Shitty Liberals) is a prime example. PSL, to no surprise to most readers, is a political cult. They are authoritarians through and through. From my understanding, they were heavily involved in the establishment of the camp and took on security and police liaison roles. They used this position to limit the possibilities of encampment members. If a member of the camp felt insulted or under threat by an agitator, PSL members rushed to remind them not to engage with the agitator, not to "stoop to their level" as an organizer said. Peace police. PSL listed their times as "shifts" reminding us they see the task of liberation as a job, not a radical break from that concept. They'd very much act the way we all do at work, check the time to wait to go home. Where is that joy? When some showed up for their shifts, they'd say, "Come to me with any questions or concerns." This is gold, given they just showed up and tried to wrestle influence into their hands, away from those who'd been there all fucking day. Eventually, too, PSL left (as some said "went on strike") because, to quote a leader, "There is just a bit too much disorganization and anti-PSL sentiment floating around at the moment for us to be effective." This crippled our overnight security capacity and we had to use elderly faculty members who sympathized with us to compensate. PSL showed no interest in doing work for the Palestinian people, only to enforce their own leadership. If PSL isn't in charge, the movement is wrong!

This all is nothing new, as I imagine most people who've gone to protests or other similar events have engaged with similar groups.

In terms of the authority of the camp, we are still reckoning with the idea of organizers. People who often don't facilitate the development of projects, but come to direct and manage them. I was not involved in the creation of the Popular University for Gaza, but my understanding is several organizations came together to create it, but there were also autonomous people and groupings who felt restricted by the calls for optics and sensibility in the early hours and days of the camp. The first day, I arrived in the evening, rain and mud abounded. Cops had already raided several times, arrested two people and destroyed much of the camp. The negotiation team sold out the camp under threat of police repression. In many ways, I sympathize, we could not have held the camp and it was better to reconsider the conditions we were in. The organizers allowed us to be placed in a new spot, designated by the administration. This spot was out of the way, and as we learned, monitored by an advanced security system that scanned phone and



biometric data. Later on in that week, a homeless man who had pro-Palestine signs was removed because he was drinking. I have my own opinions on alcohol, and I am sympathetic to drug-free spaces, but instead of asking him to put the alcohol out of camp, he was forced to leave by the leadership to maintain respectability.

Given the confrontation with police on day one, and the decrease in police presence going forward, the confrontational energy faded away. I am not interested in confrontation for its own sake, especially when people claim it's for a greater good, in this case, Palestine. However, it made us less dangerous and fluid in decisions. Organizers, who were originally just negotiators, quickly crystallized into leaders and managers. This came with the constant claim that "There is no leadership here." Not to espouse ideas of the *tyranny of the structurelessness,* but these claims were always levied when someone questioned leadership, and it led to the eventual belief that the direction of the camp was indeed a consensus, and not that of a small group of people. They held all the knowledge and kept the average person in the dark.

Also without surprise is the identity politics of it all. Any radical claims were simplified as an expression of whiteness, even when those ideas were echoed by non-White people. Anarchists were nearly forced out entirely by the disrespect. I was in a meeting when someone suggested negotiations isn't the whole of the project and she got tore into as simply wanting "fuck shit up." When I said she simply suggested that we can't exclude all tools, an organizer said something to the effect of "If your goal isn't divestment, you're just here to fuck shit up," which dismissed the woman was interested in divestment, she just had a different opinion on how to obtain it..

What blows my mind the most is that leaders didn't consider the claims that I and others put forth: *the administration is waiting us out, they're waiting for people to go home.* They said this wasn't true, they were afraid of the camp being there for commencement ceremonies. Well, our camp ended the day before commencement. People went home. The statement by SJP and FJP (Students for Justice in Palestine & Faculty for Justice in Palestine, respectively. [The former being a primary leadership group.]) put out a statement that the camp ended on the terms of the protesters, that this was a temporary stop. But... was it on their terms? Students had to go home, including many organizers. That is the structure of university life. It ended on the terms of the status quo. How can it be said to be temporary if the new has yet to begin?How does the recognition of genocide lend itself to going home for the summer? How deeply can one feel for the people of Palestine if they're just willing to pack up and go back home?



While I appreciate many people I met and things I learned, I am reminded that in so-called-*liberated spaces*, the State continues to exist, as we are the State.

As Gustav Landauer said, "The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another... We are the State and we shall continue to be the State until we have created the institutions that form a real community."



RECALIBRATION TOWARDS ANARCHY
A REREADING OF AYN RAND'S *ANTHEM*

-An Unconquered Golden One

"It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon a paper no others are to see. It is base and evil. It is as if we were speaking alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone."
- Equality 7-2521, opening words from *Anthem*

Ideas are best used as tools, not as foundations or directions, and certainly not truth. We can utilize them for specific tasks and reasons and points of reference in the ongoing creative expression of our lives. They can be particular lenses to temporarily gaze through in order to understand a certain complex dynamic or context. They can touch a place around some corner one thought unreachable. I guess, to some degree, an idea is like a dildo, you can acquire great pleasure, release, and self-understanding from it and then put it away in a nightstand, or you can use it to just fuck yourself. I play with ideas, they do not play me.

I tussle with more nihilistic ideas and thinkers when I begin to feel too hopeful about an aspect of society or any sort of positive social project (so just about never). I reread Bonanno and ponder insurrectionary concepts when I begin to feel too static in my carved out and defended enclave or when a very rare and real opening or rupture seems possible. I revisit primitivist texts when I want a certain type of inspiration from the more direct and immediate human experience. I pick up surrealist material when I wish to open or twist my understanding of reality from an unpredictable perspective. I read romantically-tinted poetry and listen to emotionally-dripping music when my heart is too parched and in need of a certain gushy nourishment. I explore dark cynical comedy when I get to my breaking point with the morons of this world and need to pull out a more absurdist perspective and invoke unexpected laughter. And, I read individualist and egoist texts when I forget to place myself at the center of my world, with all meaningful relationships moving outward from there. There are so many interesting takes and ideas and directions to tinker with, push and pull on, and dive into which might enrich our lives, without becoming an ideological soldier on one hand, or a post-modern dupe and clown that tethers itself to the perpetual bankruptcy of nothingness on the other.

Ideas, and those who speak, write, or live them, can be helpful when they are used as temporary contextualized recalibration for understanding and more precisely locating and expressing our unique selves in this world. If we consider the generalized anarchist space, with its undeniable and almost complete immersion into leftism and its inherent collectivist morality (among so many other limitations and problems), more individualist infusions from a diverse array of directions are absolutely necessary if it is not to become deathly anemic in the actual qualities of anarchy.

One type of pool that I personally enjoy wading in is the alleged and ever-growing and continually redefined "forbidden zones", where I may wrestle my way through the challenges they might offer and also build on the support they might provide. There are countless of these "dangerous" places that could help individuals and the anarchist space in a genuine, refreshing, and robust recalibration towards anarchy. It would be sad and troubling if anarchists felt that they had absolutely nothing to learn about themselves, the world, and other people's perspective on it, from the likes of those who have been or are becoming "forbidden". I have a hard time imagining myself without some of the provocative takes and various flavors of transgressions by likes of such pariahs as Bob Black, Peter Lamborn Wilson, William Burroughs, Charles Bukowski, Jim Goad, Ernst Jünger, Benjamin De Casseres, Dora Marsden, (the dreaded) Ragnar Redbeard... and those are the one's I can list in public without too much fear of some sort of authoritarian retribution, I hope. I would also include somewhere around there an arch-enemy of collectivism, Ayn Rand.

"But I still wonder how it was possible, in those graceless years of transition, long ago, that men did not see whither they were going, and went on, in blindness and cowardice, to their fate."
- Equality 7-2521, from *Anthem*

So, let's get to my reason for taking temporary pause from my directly-experienced life to put pen to paper

here. My teenage daughter was recently assigned Ayn Rand's *Anthem* to read in her sophomore high school literature class. I did not have the reactionary and closed-minded response that most leftists, and more unfortunate, most anarchists, would have to this. For one, I trust my daughter's more than competent comprehension skills, critical take, and generally anarchic outlook, being extremely bright, courageous, independent, and well, homeschooled for most of her education. Two, I am not threatened by mere words, and I much enjoy those which provoke. And three, I greatly appreciate some of Rand's perspective in certain realms.



Even though it has been a couple of decades since my last reading of Ayn Rand, I remembered her as thoughtful, strong, challenging, and in very specific respects, completely disagreeable, all reasons to engage with the most concise piece in her catalog. I remembered reading Rand at my daughter's age, along with a whole hell of a lot of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" in which "THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal." is a great companion to *Anthem*, especially for a teenager's, hopefully, ever-expanding mind).

So, after an interesting conversation about the book with my daughter — her reading, her teacher's perspective, and other student's thoughts — and with my deviantly transgressive little heart that knew most of my more collectivist-oriented friends would cringe with ignorantly self-righteous disgust, I started to flip through the book, finally settling into a comfortable chair with a cup of herbal tea from our backwood garden's bounty and plowed through the short but poignant novella in just a couple of hours on a rainy early winter morning.

Anthem was written by Ayn Rand (born Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum 1905-1982) in 1937 during a break from her substantial work *The Fountainhead* (1943), her breakthrough novel about a forceful and seemingly unflappable architect's push against both the credit-grabbing and the bootlicking surrogate actors. While an interesting read, it is not something I would necessarily recommend or bother reviewing. Rand originally conceived preliminary versions of *Anthem* as a play as far back as her teen years during the desperate, hungry, collectivizing, consolidating, and purge-heavy era of early Soviet Russia. She eventually fled to the United States where she would begin writing screenplays, dramas for broadway, and other fictional narratives. When she got to seriously working on *Anthem* in her early thirties, she envisioned it as a serialized story in a magazine,

but when she was unable to sell it that way it got published in its recognizable novella form. Its original working title, *Ego*, was changed because it was too blunt and did not allow for an unfolding of the story by presenting her philosophy slowly throughout and ultimately to be discovered fully by the book's end. It was renamed *Anthem*, or "ode" to the ego, possibly one of the few anthems I could ever find myself humming beneath my breath.

Anthem was an early fictional and more poetic sketch of Rand's later and more developed (and in my opinion less interesting but still valuable as a tool) philosophical system of ethical egoism and rationalism, as opposed to altruism and faith, that she called Objectivism. Rand's Objectivism was a self-described "new moral philosophy of rational self-interest" and is poignantly given explanation in a lengthy monologue delivered by the strike leader John Galt in her 1957 novel, *Atlas Shrugged,* considered by many to be her masterpiece and grand fictional finale. Objectivism centers one's goal as their own happiness, creative productivity as their activity, and reason as truth. The first, obviously a vital anarchist goal, the second could be argued to a limited and specific degree, the third is unfortunate in at least the way I conceive of both reason and truth, not to mention all the morality this all tends to be steeped in.

Rand thought of artistic expression as a re-creation of the world in relation to the metaphysical values of the artist. She felt that this form of presentation allowed for a more graspable conception of ideas than academic or philosophical means. Rand expressed individualist romantic realism and was rabidly anti-collectivist and anti-religious, and this was the theme through all of her novels and essays. I find her later non-fictional works too rigid and uninteresting and her larger novels more convoluted, and I never really had enough resources to be to invested in the whole capitalism thing either, but there is a dry sweetness and stark poetic nature to *Anthem* that makes Rand's ideas more readable and relatable. It is also a very short book, adding to its intimacy, not the enormous tomes of her later fiction.

The story in *Anthem*, which could be viewed as a short series of emotive explorations following an arc from collectivist slavery towards individual freedom, is written from the perspective of a young man named Equality 7-2521 and takes place in some unspecified dystopian future after the world had reentered a vague dark age. Equality 7-2521 details the stark events of his life up to that point, forbiddingly writing by candlelight in a secretly discovered underground tunnel, a remnant from the Unmentionable Times, from before, we are to assume, the previous technological civilization collapsed and the current authoritarian collectivism arose from its ashes.

Equality 7-2521 is torn between his violations against authority, now mostly self-imposed by each member of society, and the knowledge and solitude he has deviantly found underground. Each night his uniqueness and desires come more and more to the foreground as he sheds his ingrained obedience. He nourishes his perpetually itching curiosity, above-average intelligence, and inclination for preferences, all he had once thought and was told were curses, defects, crimes, and sins. No matter how hard he tried, he could never conform to the standards of mediocrity and sameness, as much as he thought he wished he could. He grew up in this tension and was distorted by it as he nervously chased a nagging glimmer still faintly flickering in his heart and mind. Even when the Council of Vocations assigned him to be a street sweeper, instead of a scientist or scholar as he wished, he half-heartedly convinced himself that this pleased him, for it meant he could atone for his crimes and sins, yet he was never quite satisfied and never really believed this to be true.

"It is my mind which thinks, and the judgment of my mind is the only searchlight that can find the truth."
- Equality 7-2521, from *Anthem*

During his tenth year, Equality 7-2521 witnessed the sanctioned public burning of the Transgressor of the Unspeakable Word, he who had uncovered and spoken the forbidden word "I". During his execution, the unflinching Transgressor exchanged a deep gaze with Equality 7-2521, setting into motion his eventually actualized, yet tormented, experimentation and discovery. During this period he finds the underground tunnel, books, and materials to tinker with at night while the sheep sleep. He eventually harnesses electricity and constructs a lightbulb. He feels he must share this with the World Council, and thus thrust society into a new era of enlightenment. His hopes are extinguished, however, when he is tossed into the Palace of Corrective Detention and tortured after mistakenly returning back tardy to his barracks one night. He escapes and brings his invention to the Council who threaten to execute him for insubordination and demand his lightbulb for

destruction. Equality 7-2521 flees the city into the Uncharted Forest where he discovers his first sustained tastes of freedom.

In the forest, despite his newly-found liberty, he is saddened by the fact he has lost his one chance for true love and chosen companionship. During Equality 7-2521's time working as a street sweeper on a rural highway he had met Liberty 5-3000, a peasant girl who also followed a similar quest for knowledge, discovery, and freedom. They spoke, although it was forbidden, and immediately fell in love, renaming each other: Equality 7-2521 becomes The Unconquered and Liberty 5-3000, The Golden One. After a day or so alone in the woods after his escape, to The Unconquered's delight, The Golden One appears. She had fled The Palace of Mating, where she was expected to breed with whomever The Council had chosen to be the socially-engineered correct match. She had followed her true lover into the Uncharted Forest.

They vow to live in freedom and seclusion in this newfound paradise. They find joy and pleasures never dreamed of. They eventually find an abandoned mansion in the mountains and claim this home which is filled with fine things and an enormous library. The Unconquered devours the written word, eventually discovering in print the forbidden "I". As the book abruptly ends, the lovers once again take new names, The Golden One is now Gaea and The Unconquered is Prometheus. They pledge to preserve this place, welcome in like-minded folk, and birth a new breed of humans who cherish individualism and the ever-lasting supremacy of the ego.

"And my happiness needs no higher aim to vindicate it. My happiness is not the means to any end. It is the end. It is its own goal. It is its own purpose."
- Equality 7-2521, from *Anthem*

Again, for the record, as if that matters to the closed-minded ideological tools and the ignorant fools who will dishonestly and erroneously paint me as being in-bed with AnCaps, fascist-adjacent, blah, blah, blah, I have many fundamental disagreements with Rand in general, and with certain aspects of *Anthem*, but still highly recommend its reading. My primary diversions from Rand's perspective, especially how they are displayed in *Anthem*, are fairly significant: her views of industrialism and technology as means to free the individual from the collective. This was a common theme and perspective of her time, progressively growing more intense the century or so leading up to it. Even one of my favorite literary libertines, Oscar Wilde, optimistically thought technology would free up our lives from the mundane chores so that we might prioritize more creative and pleasurable endeavors. Rand saw technology as a prime form of individual creation that would inherently help humanity flourish through invention and innovation. Both of these authors might realize the folly in their views if they knew its later forms and consequences. I believe the inherent slavery and alienation in technology would become obvious to Wilde for sure, and also possibly to Rand as well.

All that said, while Rand and I disagree greatly in regard to technology and industrialism, as well as rationality and atheism, and, of course, in some pretty substantial economic matters not really addressed directly in this earlier work, our view of the individual and collectivism could not be more parallel, at least in how it is displayed in *Anthem*. The streamline and precise anarchic transition from the oppressive "We" to the empowered "I" that Rand plots in *Anthem* offers much for the contemporary anarchist to honestly consider, even if it does fall apart somewhat for me in the last few pages. I do believe, as she describes her own philosophical connections and applications in more detail in later works, especially *Atlas Shrugged,* our perspectives move further and further apart, but still relevant enough to offer points of reflection, distinction, challenge, warning, and debate. Conflating who Ayn Rand became or other's readings of her work (or non-reading hear-say condemnations) does not do *Anthem* justice as a clear and precise cautionary tale against collectivism, unless, of course, someone has an acknowledged or unrecognized ideological position to rabidly defend.

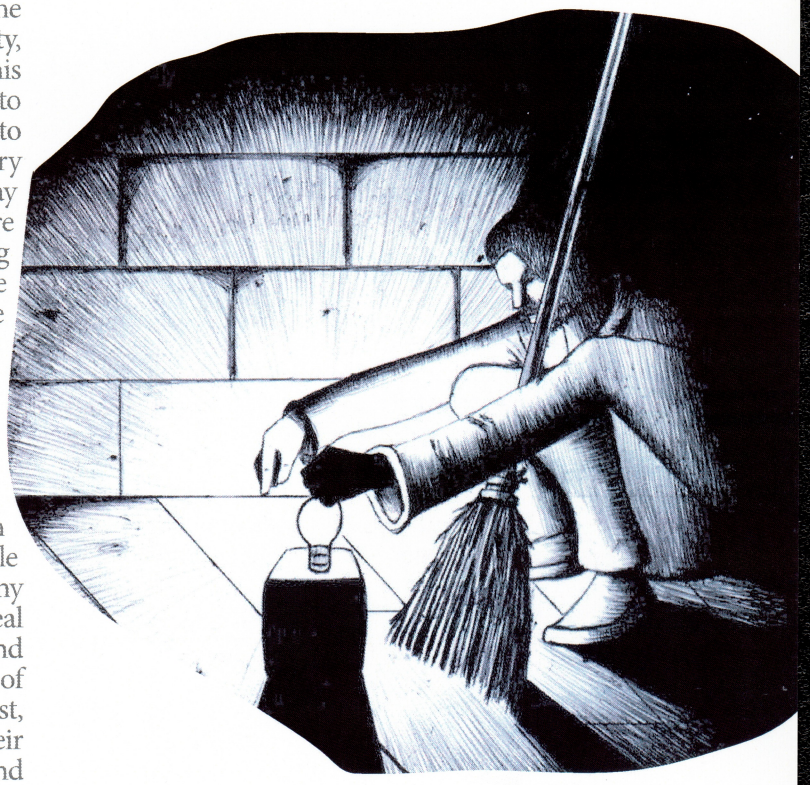
As mentioned, at the end of the story, our protagonist sheds the name assigned to him by the collectivist authority, as well as the one his lover had anointed him upon their shared awakening, and takes the name Prometheus, a theme used throughout Rand's writings. This could be read in many different ways. There are two main ones that come to mind for me. First, and probably more likely given Rand's proclivity for technological advancements as a form of free-expression of the self, is the frighteningly optimistic opening for an ever-more technological reality, as Prometheus, sometimes referred to as the God of Fire, did by defying the Olympian gods and stealing flame from them and giving it to humanity in the form of technology, knowledge, and civilization. Boo. Hiss.

My other reading, and slightly more to my liking, is that using the name Prometheus is not merely a metaphor for creative and innovative people rebelling against the imposed restrictions of modern collectivist society, but also the condemnation to eternal torment for this transgression. In the lore, Prometheus was bound to a rock and an eagle was sent to eat his liver, thought to be the seat of human emotions. Growing back every night, his liver would be devoured again the next day in an unending cycle. Rand, while obviously more than enthusiastic about individuals experimenting with technological creation and what could be potential outcomes of such tinkering, might also be warning, or just stating as some perceived objective fact to the ongoing endless perseverance needed in this perpetual endeavor, with one can of worms opening even larger ones forever. While Rand might welcome this challenge with a gusto that I cannot appreciate as an anarchic-luddite-oriented individual, at least Ayn Rand appears honest, both with her thoughts and feelings, and their possible consequences. This is more than I can say for so many contemporary anarchists, who seem to either conceal or do not even begin to understand themselves and their relationship to anarchy and the consequences of their thoughts and actions. I require a more honest, open, and living interaction with ideas and their consequences than is typically offered in general, and sadly, in the anarchist space.

A rigorous recalibration towards anarchy is vital if anarchists are to retain any of the libertine values necessary for its authenticity and life. I think one place to begin is to venture into to the "forbidden zones" that are guarded from one side and damned from the other. Uncover them from the agendas that bury and distort them, explore them, struggle with them, not for or against them, and use them for the understanding and expression of one's unique self and its relationship to others and the world. Anarchy demands this. Are you ready to stop playing it safe? I am.

Oh, and to my daughter's high school literature teacher's credit, they followed up the reading of *Anthem* with Ursula K. Le Guin's philosophical short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", but I won't spoil that particular treasure for you here…

An Unconquered Golden One
TransgressiveAlliance@riseup.net



**The Transgressive Alliance is an anonymous group of anarchists whose goal is to step across and beyond the limits set and prescribed by society and its subsets and scenes (especially the anarchist space), to push on uncomfortable points in order to provoke and flesh out important discussions, to mock conformity, to make ideologues, moralists, and citizens feel uncomfortable, and to have some fun like anti-social, amoral, transgressive, and deviant anarchists used to before they became good citizens, harm reductionists, architects for equity, engineers for social justice. A wide assortment of humorously pointed and transgressive flyers and things (including: We Welcome All, AnarchX - The Anarchist Superhero, Make Queer Queer Again, Perineum Sunning Class, Resisting The Leftist Creep, Don't Trend On Me, Diversity Of Tactics, The Post Times newspaper wrap, altered Safer Space Policy brochure, and much more!) are available for $2 each or as free emailed PDF's so you can enjoy them in the safety of your own home or distribute them in your town too! Contact for details.*

REDBEARD PART TWO

MIGHT

-Jason Rodgers

I've often considered exactly what Ragnar Redbeard was trying to do with his book Might is Right. I've previously explored this in the essay "Who Was That Mysterious Barbarian?" (See *Oak* 5) Was he trying to argue that things are as they should be, with the elites being the worthy victors? Or was he trying to prod people into taking action, seizing their might in their fist rather than whining about rights?

There is a pretty good case to be made that Redbeard dreamed of the slaves rising to kill their masters. There are passages in the book that advocate for such. He wrote "How can a slave recover his liberty? By re-conquering his conqueror. If he feels that he is not man enough for his master, then he MUST submit, cut his own throat, or die fighting unsubdued" (Redbeard 129). He showed that he had no respect for those who submit to oppression when he wrote "Better far for a free animal to be killed outright than to be mastered, or subordinated, and enchained" (Redbeard 213). He had no optimistic or happy vision in this regard, instead writing "The oppression of one class by another is always induced by the physical cowardice of the victimized, and Nature has no love for dastards- whether rich or poor" (Redbeard 231). Maybe this was blaming the victim, or maybe it was instigation to refuse victimization. He was himself a left-wing, street-fighting radical in Australia. After fleeing to America, he was a known associate of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Dil Pickle Club. These are all pieces of evidence for his radicalism. But then you find passages of explicit racism in the same text, really vile passages, not merely something that has to be picked apart to find the secret racism. You find passages in which he praises dictators and emperors. It is unclear what he was trying to accomplish.

Dora Marsden made the case for an anti-authoritarian advocacy of power in an explicit way. When I first read her I thought "This is saying what I wanted Redbeard to say, the reading I'd like to make of Might is Right". She advocated that it was in the oppressed's interest to use power rather than fall into fantasies of a world without power, which ultimately involved a role of powerlessness, a pose of victimhood. She wrote "The poor who are too modest to 'take,' complain because more is not 'given' them. They make the enormous mistake of thinking that 'shares' are allocated on principle: whereas in reality, each fixes his own share" (Marsden 76). Within this was a critique of morality, as she wrote "How are they going to persuade them that the 'Morals' which serve them so badly are better ways than the 'Immorals' which serve their conquerors so well?" (Marsden 113). One might say this is the same as a critique of ideology, though I suspect Marsden would feel this was trying to lie through candy coating. Her vision was not necessarily always pleasant. Again it might be accused of blaming the victim, as when she wrote "they are not making us 'servile' -- they couldn't -- our own private efforts in that line are not to be bettered" (Marsden 187). To those who might think this is blaming the victims the obvious question is: when has blaming the oppressor been effective? When has a guilt trip caused the elite to check their privilege? I would say never. Examples that one might point to are more likely the elite experiencing fear that the oppressed are intending to attack.

Some might point to when she stopped calling herself an anarchist and began calling herself an archist, but this forgets the context of why she did so. In an argument, Benjamin Tucker accused her of being an archist because she felt that it was neither possible nor desirable to live without power relations. He claimed that her philosophy necessitated power (which he seemed to associate with government) and that she was an archist. She snottily replied that she was an archist then, because a world without power is a world without life. The

sense of humor she expressed is generally ignored. She wrote "Life is feasting and conflict: this is its zest. The cry for peace is the weariness of those who are too faint-hearted to live" (Marsden 29). She pointed out that his philosophy was a gnostic fantasy world without predation, consumption, or action, in short death. As the woman under the radiator said in the movie Eraserhead: "In Heaven Everything's Fine".

For her part she saw this "Clerico-libertarian-archism", as she called it, as "a more subtle, tyrannical power of repression than any the world as yet has known: its only distinction being that the Policeman, Judge, and Executioner are ever on the spot, a Trinity of Repression that is a Spy to boot, i.e. Conscience, the 'Sense of Duty'" (Marsden 101). Marsden herself maintained a firm opposition to statism, writing "If therefore to be Anarchist is to hope for and strive after the abolition of 'The State' as by the force of governors and submissiveness of governed together compounded, a term (one may hope) only a temporary significance, then we are it" (Marsden 102). In the end she argued "the sooner the poor become 'Archists' therefore the better" (Marsden 105).

Laurance Labadie, a fan of Ragnar, made a solid critique of the core of the Redbeard philosophy. He wrote "It seems to me that from the proposition that you can go your way, and I mine, even though we disagree vehemently on which way is better, we may learn from each other's experience and perhaps discover that the philosophy of liberty and non-violence is a solid foundation for human relations" (Labadie 169). It seems to me that this is a more ideal scenario than the constant state of war. I think that people of radically different persuasions, even contradictory viewpoints, could come to a sense of understanding and respect, if only we could be willing to leave each other alone. We might even find that we like each other, sometimes, if we weren't forced together in a mass society.

The most basic problem of the form of egoism Redbeard adopted was that it prioritized physical might over forms of might, which ultimately just means ability. Redbeard wrote "the natural law is tooth and claw. All else is error." (Redbeard 26). His law has little to say about cleverness or intelligence. It has even less to say about charisma or the ability to form friendships. One of the few times Redbeard wrote on the subject was "But I say unto you: -Love thy kindred, love thy friends, love thyself, and hate thine enemies with a whole heart. Be a foe to your friend's foe, a friend to your friend's friend, and above all things, permit no wrong done unto thee or thine to pass unchallenged, unredressed, unavenged" (Redbeard 176). The most brutal sociopath could easily be subdued by a group held together by mutuality and affinity. In fact, this was common in anarchic band and tribal societies. As Bob Black wrote

> "I am not, however, opposed to killing intolerable people, as a last resort. Chronic troublemakers should be banished or, if they wont go away and stay away, killed. Based on my extensive historical and ethnographic studies, which have especially focused on non-state band, tribal and chiefdom-type anarchist societies, I know that all of them- all of them- provide for capital punishment in some circumstances" (Black 212).

Marsden also advocated for a sort of might is right, but she effectively de-essentialized it. She equated might with spirit, writing "the Might of a force is indeed the measure of the amount of spirit, just as submission and unwilling preparations are the measure of the lack of it" (Marsden 311). In this she allowed for a vast multitude of mights, i.e. abilities. Even if one could not overthrow those oppressing them they could still exert themselves, for instance through writing or sabotage.

The bigger problem is that we no longer live in a society based on explicit forms of power. Felix Guattari described the new form of authority: "In its hegemonic function, power is a virtual configuration that metabolizes any element to serve its own purposes" (Guattari 65). Now power is diffused, based on a model that resembles cybernetics. "The repressive societies" wrote Guattari, "now being established have two new characteristics: repression is softer, more diffuse, more generalized, but at the same time much more violent" (Guattari 81). He also described the development of "World-Wide Integrated Capitalism": "often it is the network which guides and manipulates the State by remote control, its actual interlocutors being 'social partners,' pressure groups, and lobbies" (Guattari 216).

The totality is reiterating and automatically self sustaining, "It is like a body that changes its cells constantly while remaining the same" (Baudrillard 65). There could be full integration of all marginalized groups with no change to the structure. The forces that keep us in our

places aren't storm troopers, but the alienation of mass society, "a megamachine encompassing a multitude of scattered elements" (Guattari 217). The structures of authority are internalized, so we can no longer blow up the Tsar's carriage or decapitate a monarch, because the Tsar is now inside of us. This would entail destroying ourselves. "We are all parts of the Planetary Work Machine we are the machine" (P.M. 32). In the course of writing this essay it occurred to me that in some ways Marsden predicted this situation in her description of "Clerico-libertarian-archism", "a more subtle, tyrannical power of repression than any the world as yet has known" (Marsden 101).

A new micropolitics must form instead. Over the last decade or so I've fallen more and more into purely individualist anarchist forms. In part, this is because it is clear that the social is dead, at the moment. But this doesn't mean that I reject social action, just that it will come when it comes. It is not possible to predict it. Trying to force it has detrimental effects. I've also come to a more thorough critique of organization and mass formations. The individualist action is micropolitics, which exists at the level of everyday life. It seems more likely to give birth to resonant currents. If even a tiny percent of people could cultivate uncontrollability in their own lives it would become an irresistible force. The conflict will not be a military showdown; it will be an extended process of subversion. It will not be a revolution, but an insurrection. The term insurrection has been devalued in recent years to focus entirely on violence, but as Apio Ludd has pointed out insurrection should be focused more on a "battle of wits". Violence is a fact of life and should not be denied, but neither should it be glamorized or emphasized. Might should be embraced, but not as mere physical strength, but instead as a general vitality. As we revitalize our drained and decayed existence we will find means to break ourselves out of this cybernetic nightmare. The mights we exert will have to be individual, in our daily lives. There is still the possibility of carving out liberty and autonomy, which will clearly enhance our lives as we live them. They also just might result in surprising occurrences, changing things in ways we can not yet imagine.

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Nan Goldin: Cookie at Tin Pan Alley, NYC, *1983, Cibachrome, 30 by 40 inches. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.*

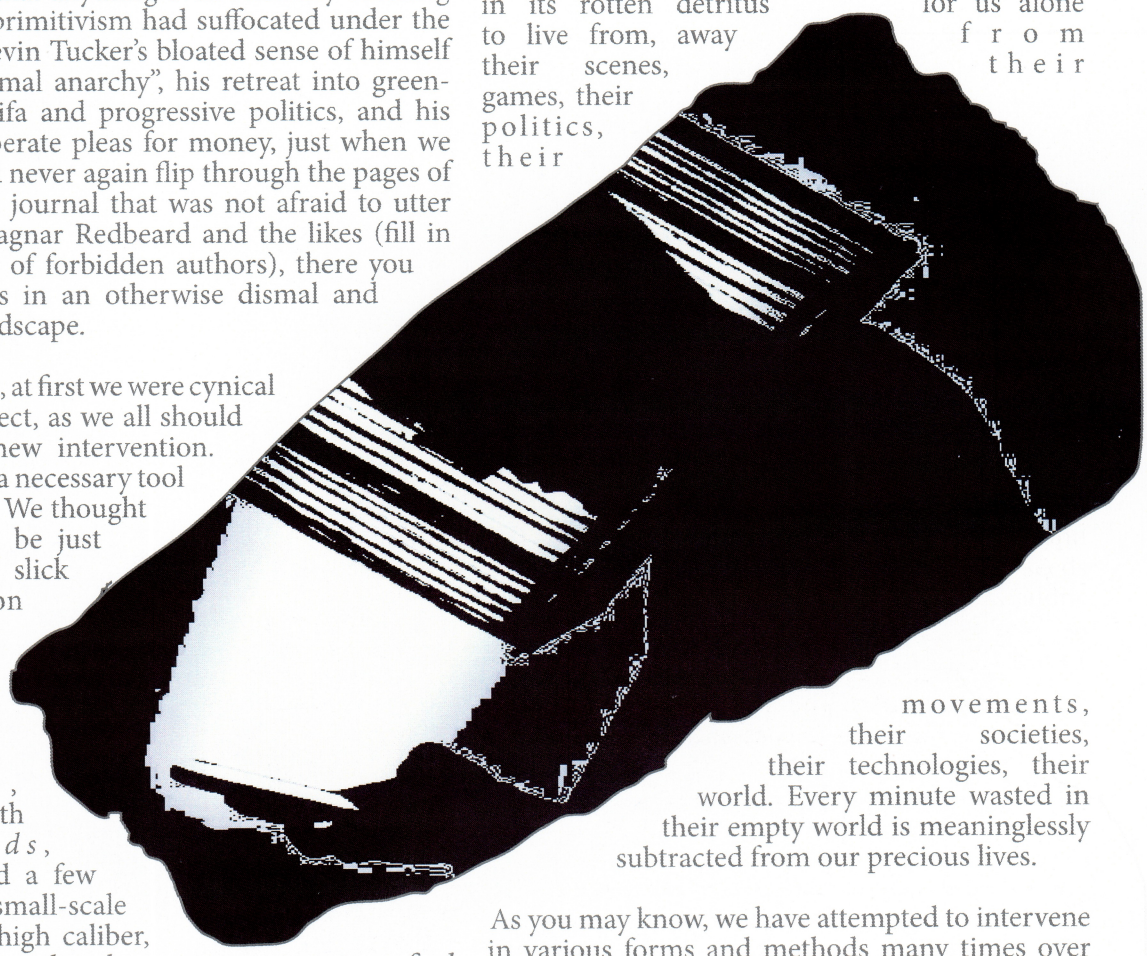
A LETTER FROM THE CONTEMPTUOUS

OAK,

We are writing to let you know that you are one of the few anarchist publications that we do not view with complete contempt. Well done. Just when we thought the anarchist space was devoid of anything interesting and provocative, just when we thought that anything even remotely smelling of anarcho-primitivism had suffocated under the weight of Kevin Tucker's bloated sense of himself and his "primal anarchy", his retreat into green-flavored antifa and progressive politics, and his endless desperate pleas for money, just when we thought we'd never again flip through the pages of an anarchist journal that was not afraid to utter the name Ragnar Redbeard and the likes (fill in any number of forbidden authors), there you are, an oasis in an otherwise dismal and depleted landscape.

To be honest, at first we were cynical of your project, as we all should be of any new intervention. Cynicism is a necessary tool for survival. We thought *OAK* might be just another slick reproduction of the same old lines, but with each issue it has become, along with *Backwoods*, *Baedan*, and a few other small-scale projects of high caliber, one of the only places to find ongoing anarchist analysis and critique that isn't completely muddled with the predictably nauseating taint of identity politics, activism, harm-reduction, inclusivity, and ritualistic reactionary combative performance or the simple-minded and shallow cliches, slogans, wishful-thinking, name-dropping, perpetual displacement of brain-dead cyber-anarchism. Again, well done.

That being said, we, The Contemptuous, feel that OAK is just warming up, for there is so much still to negate, to pick apart, to destroy, and of course, to ridicule, even within. There still seems, however, to be a whiff of hope, dreams of transformation, and plans for the future in your printed words. These will only lead down rabbit-holes of wasted time, dilution, delusion, and despair, as we have all witnesses over and over again. It is beyond time to smash wildly with the hammer of negation and refusal, to critically sift through the pulverized dust for fragments of enjoyment, meaning, and authentic value, and to sow our black seeds in its rotten detritus for us alone to live from, away from their scenes, their games, their politics, their movements, their societies, their technologies, their world. Every minute wasted in their empty world is meaninglessly subtracted from our precious lives.



As you may know, we have attempted to intervene in various forms and methods many times over the years, and it has almost always been met with dull ignorance, dishonest reactions, and the blank stares of zombified cowards. If you still have the stomach for this putrid task, may you have no expectations, may you not mince words, and may you hold nothing sacred in their artificial and empty world. To breath their air is to inhale the stale taste of death. We do not deny that there may be a few others out their who critically and honestly understand the dark reality we dwell in, others who drink from the fountains of authentic

freedom, others who nourish and are nourished by the living world and are not seduced by the deadness of the technological nightmare nor any naive or opportunistic schemes to alter it. Maybe you can pull a few anarchic spirits out of the woodwork and share ideas. Maybe you can inspire. Maybe you can challenge and be challenged. Mostly, your project will help you understand yourself and those close to you a little better. Their is value in that. We wish you luck, one of the few things that cannot be completely controlled. Just remember, the herd is part of the machine. They cannot be trusted. They will only infect you with their laziness, stupidity, conformity, uncountable disabilities, and general compliant slave-mentality. Beware!

Aloof and Alive,
The Contemptuous

The Contemptuous
Communiques #1-6
"Sharpening The Claws"
Spring/Summer 2023
Is available as a downloadable zine

This is the complete first wave of critical attack by The Contemptuous.

Now you can have a free pdf zine version of all six initial contemptuous communiques to read in the privacy of your own home, to print out and leave at your local social space or give to a friend, or to use for ideological and/or physical target practice!

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(Please specify if you want a pdf for screen viewing, a saddle-stitched zine format and color cover to print out yourself on real paper, or both.)

Here's what rad folx are saying about The Contemptuous zine:

"It will probably corrupt your computer and it will definitely infect your mind. Stay away! There is still so much organizing to be done out there."
- Candy Milestone, The Institute for Cultural Bionomics

"The last thing that is helpful for the much needed proliferation and opening up of anarchism for everyone is contempt. Our tent is big, but sorry folks, not that big."
- MoonToad

"The Contemptuous will never be given a platform on our non-sectarian autonomous anti-capitalist anti-fascist anti-colonial website. They do not understand what it takes to promote projects and direct actions that fight against a class divided and settler/colonial dominated society. IGF believes that a better world will be built in place of this bad one, organized from the bottom up, where power is redistributed horizontally, with The People's work filling in The People's lack, not for profit or private gain. The Contemptuous seem to just believe in themselves and each other. Boo on that."
- IGF (It's Gonna Fall)

"We will never carry this crap!"
- AR Press

"We will never carry this crap!"
- BM Press

"These cynics fail to see the openings and possibilities just under the surface of this world, the small nuggets of potential that lie in the banality of the everyday crisis. From the disaffected sanitation worker to the depressed soccer mom to the forty-something addicted to video games, there is the undeniable flicker of a future food coop volunteer, a rent control activist, or a bicycle repair collectivist ready to be unleashed! We are the future that is unwritten. Chose a Path. Find Your node. Be active. Share. Expand. Repeat. That's what we need, not more critique and contempt."
- Inhibit

"I don't even understand what the hell these people are talking about. What is an oppressed worker in a factory supposed to do with this stuff? Get off my lawn!"
- Chud Booffer, author of My Necrophilic Anarchism

"tldr. I mean, uh, we mean, how do these people expect to use the next new generation's untapped teen angst to reproduce cliche after cliche when they use all those big mean words? ...cringe!"
- MisdemeanorThoughtm Never-Needing-To-Be-Employed Collective

"Don't these so-called anarchists know there is a People's War to fight in Ukraine?"
- Wallace Cost

"The Contemptuous are the problem. The driveling bullshit from these douches must be stopped. It's beyond clear that the fascist takeover of anarchism started when people started making fun of Primordial Anarchismx and other true tendencies. We can't lose sight of the fact that The Contemptuous are the harbingers of Ron DeSantis and Trump. It just can't be denied anymore. AND, most importantly, they have NEVER mentioned the undeniable fact that the Paleo diet is the only thing that matters. lol."

-Kaylee Trucker, Greenish Black Preview

(cashapp: greennblackrepressed

venmo and paypal: greennblackish)

Oak Replies: Instead of a direct response Oak recommends The Contemptuous to read the opening editorial of this issue.

A LETTER FROM BB

I'm in my truck. It's lunchtime. Ham and cheese on white bread. I'm out here in Loudon renovating some 200-something-year-old place that seems like it should have fallen down a long time ago. The phrase "polishing a turd" was used by the electrician, and aptly.

I work on houses in the wealthiest county in the United States so that my partner and I can afford the mortgage on our house in West Virginia.

I'm hanging doors, trimming them out, and running baseboard. The walls in this place are original brick – old Oak studs set two-feet-on-center, 2x6s (back when 2 meant "two" and 6 meant "six"), lath coated with a half inch of plaster. Did you know plaster has horsehair in it?

Did you know drywall had asbestos in it until about 1989? When I got licensed to work with mold and asbestos, they said that the emperor Charlemagne had asbestos tablecloths. He'd throw big feasts and then hurl the tablecloths into the fire, and they'd come out clean to the astonishment of his guests.

The walls in our West Virginia townhouse were built in 2007, so no asbestos there. The studs are sixteen-on-center, pine 2x4s (2 meaning "one and a half" and 4 meaning "three and a half"). That oak was probably already here when white people showed up. That pine was probably grown up fast in square rows and columns, planted to be cut – a whole coniferous forest matrix of all zeroes.

"Sixteen-on-center." I love that. The alliteration and rhythm of that phrasal adjective. It means the center of each stud lands at sixteen-inch increments. Sixteen, thirty-two, four-foot, and so on, the whole way down the wall. I've tried to grow a poem out of "sixteen-on-center" for the last three years that I've been tearing down and standing up walls, but it hasn't germinated yet. Maybe next year.

I surprise myself to write that it's my third year of this. I've learned mold and asbestos, learned hanging and finishing drywall, a little paint. Learned framing walls and floors, trusses and stairs, doors and windows, siding, baseboard, crown molding.

I felt called to it. Before too long, all weather will be extreme weather, they say. Four years ago, I started helping out a mutual aid network focused on disaster relief – suitably named Mutual Aid Disaster Relief (MADR). There are no "natural" disasters anymore. They're our fault.

Hurricanes and floods mean mud and black mold in the basement. Tornadoes mean shattered windows and unhinged doors, far-flung roofs and collapsed walls. They mean opportunist landlords evicting their tenants, making repairs, and renting at a higher price – unless some good Samaritan makes the fixes first, leaving them with no grounds to evict.

But all disasters – financial ones, disease ones, opioid and fentanyl ones, all man-made too – mean more folks out of doors. So, rebuilding is more than chainsaws, tarps, and plywood. It's dry socks, dish soap, walkers and diapers. It's solar-powered charging stations where electricity is down, mobile shower units where there's no running water, and school buses converted into kitchens.

It's clean syringes and naloxone, first aid kits, water filters, birth control and abortion pills, estrogen and testosterone. It's grief and rage and disorder and sleeping through the sound of thunder. It's a lot.

But it feels like something I ought to be helping with. I can't see, for myself, turning fully to the wilderness, making a life out of felled trees, creek water, and buckskins. I'm amazed and impressed by those who can.

I'm grateful for, and in awe of, all the ones who start fires with sticks and teach others to do the same. I'm grateful for the ones chaining themselves to trees and bulldozers in Atlanta, who are fighting bullshit RICO charges in the struggle against Cop City. I'm grateful for those smuggling clean water supplies into Palestine and for volunteer medics in Ukraine.

I'm even a little grateful for the keyboard warriors, the online anarchists. I'd be lying if I claimed to have found my way to becoming who I am, in this moment, without them. I can say the same of certain leftists who talk about some future revolution in the same way that many Christian denominations talk about the rapture.

There was a time that I was stirred by the same notions as those black-and-reds who know IRA songs by heart and fantasize about executing the bourgeoisie in apocalypse bunkers – yet have never held a firearm in their lives, much less needed to.

That's not at all to say that I accept the status quo of the state's monopoly on violence or endorse some kind of pure pacifism. It's only to say that I believe it's a mistake to – when confronted by the threats of civilization – reflexively reach for the shotgun when there's a hammer closer to hand. Anyway, I've eaten my sandwich. I've got to go put these doors on their hinges, S.K.

With great love,
B.B.

Against the Modern Colonizers

(review of James M. Van Lanen, Human Rewilding in the 21st Century. Gakona, AK: Birch Top Hill Press, 2024 *available from Oak)

- Jason Rodgers

One of the great difficulties of critiquing or attacking the big illusions of modernity is that to do so directly, as large concepts, results in an abstract analysis. To write a critique with more precision requires a micro view, generally a thorough forensic accounting of the flaws of a specific individual or group. These will sometimes be dismissed as obsessive or as overkill. They are not though. The target might be incidental, but this is the only way to make such critiques in an effective way. This is what James Van Lanen does in Human Rewilding in the 21st Century.

James focuses primarily on an article by the anthropologists Noa Lavi, Alice Rudge, and Graeme Warren, titled "Rewild Your Inner Hunter-Gatherer: How an idea About our Ancestral Condition is Recruited into Popular Debate in Britain and Ireland". Lavi, et al made the argument that concepts of the primitive and wild prevent indigenous peoples from having agency and hold them back. This is based upon a progressive concept, arguing for the full integration of indigenous peoples into modernity. They see this as a decolonization perspective. Van Lanen thoroughly debunked their claims, arguing that they were, in actuality, using a colonialist mindset.

Van Lanen thoroughly used their own quotes to prove the ugliness of their worldview. This is, honestly, a somewhat frustrating section, as reading so many quotations from Lavi, Rudge, and Warren makes your head hurt. But sometimes you have to descend into the filth to understand the full extent of the problem.

Lavi, et al made the argument that rewilding concepts prevent indigenous people from having full agency, but completely ignored the fact that the relentless march of progress forces integration and renders other lifeways more and more impossible. In their argument they posited a singular worldview of the indigenous. They argued that this progress is what all indigenous people want. They seemed to think they could somehow come to a definitive conclusion of what indigenous people really wanted (perhaps they are remote viewers?). Van Lanen demolishes this claim through thorough quotations from his extensive fieldwork among indigenous communities. He does not prove what indigenous people want, as there is not a singular desire or worldview. He shows there is diversity. He shows that many indigenous people want to maintain self sufficiency, traditional ways of life, autonomy, etc. He also is honest enough to admit that different indigenous people want different things, including some who want massive resource extraction and ecocide. You can't just accept someone's view because they are part of a marginal community. Respect requires criticism. At times Van Lanen might go for a bit of overkill on the extended quotations from people in the indigenous community, but this might be necessary to make the argument for people who are not already familiar with things like anti-civ critiques. Sometimes you just have to bash someone over the head with examples to prove a point.

Van Lanen writes "it seems to me that these anthropologists, despite their claims to a decolonial perspective, have in-effect situated themselves within the neocolonial camp whose effective aim is, still, to 'civilize' the Indians" (34-35). He provides a telling quotation from Lavi and crew, who cited an "imagined independence from the state and its services" (53) for indigenous people as one of the problems. I might be even harsher with Lavi, et al than Van Lanen was. I think that it might be appropriate to say that they are comparable to economic hitmen, or at least that they lay down the ideological groundwork for these sorts of activities. Another comparison might be New Tribes Mission, a missionary group that specialized in attempting to discover bands and hunter-gatherers that had yet made contact with civilization, often through helicopter flyovers over unsettled lands. When they discovered the groups they would build roads to them, attempt to covert them to a particularly nasty form of Christianity, and make them part of the industrial workforce (a concise expose of the group was printed in Green Anarchist (UK) issue

68/69, 2003). Critiques of these sorts of activities used to be common among leftists, but these days they have allowed the hard right to entirely occupy anti-globalization. To me this shows the growing poverty of the left, and why they are ultimately even more dangerous than the right.

Speaking of which, I think that James missed an opportunity when addressing their claim that rewilding tendencies had been taken up by the right wing. James simply states that this is not true of the vast majority of the rewilding community. He argues this convincingly, but he would have done better to make his own critique of the people who are attempting use rewilding for some sort of paleo-masculinity movement or as a means of marketing Paleo-diet snack foods and such. In doing so he would have shown just how little use we have for folks like Lavi & crew.

One point of contention I have with Van Lanen is over the issue of essential human nature. He sees us as essentially hunter-gatherers from a material, evolutionary perspective. I tend to think that humans seem to be particularly adaptable to a variety of circumstances. This does not justify the conditions on modernity though. On the contrary, it simply means that the level of degradation which the human race can withstand is likely even greater than we can imagine. To think that there is an essential human nature is to think that our being can withstand the onslaught we are experiencing with less harm. In this scenario humans will instinctively rebel when pressure becomes sever enough. I certainly think this can sometimes be true, but fear it is for a lesser percent of the populace and will come much later than many other anarcho-primitivists assume.

Our adaptability isn't necessarily a cause for cheer. This adaptability is precisely the point at which I criticize things such as technology. Van Lanen fears that the "logical end-result of this type of thinking is of course an endorsement for the ongoing emergence of artificial intelligence" (133). I don't think that belief in an essential human protects us from this threat (I can think of a social media addicted anarcho-primitivist that proves this). There is a popular assumption that humans can use technology without it changing them. I have discussed plenty of times why this isn't true, so I will not fully outline these points again. I will point out that there is an empirical basis for my argument; much has best been outlined by Nicholas Carr. I would also say that I don't consider a sharp division here between the concepts of tools and technology. Tools also change us. The difference is that technology generally refers to tools which contain the entirety of the mass production and division of labor system within their use and production. The rewilding that James advocates are also tools, but tools that are based upon individual and human-sized community scales of production. They contain entirely different assumptions, assumptions that are based upon individual autonomy, as well as the mutuality of human scale community.

That is not to say that Van Lanen does a poor job defending the primitive. Particularly when he is not making claims about human nature, but instead criticizing civilization he does an excellent job. Since much of this is oriented towards confronting progressive controls, he deals with how politically correct language can be used to camouflage authoritarianism. He does an excellent job of this, stating clearly what the argument concealed. For instance, when he wrote "'Primitive' and 'wild' are offensive only for those who themselves psychologically uphold a belief in the superiority of progress and civilization" (27).

I don't think there is going to be a revolution. Furthermore, I suspect if there was it would not be the sort that I would want to be part of. Nor do I think we can rely on a collapse. So we probably should figure out means of carving out freedom within our own lives. Ideally we might desert the system. This might be impossible to do at the immediate point, but we could at least try to build up the capacity to do so. Van Lanen described rewilding as "an ongoing tool of political resistance employed by certain indigenous peoples for thousands of years" (35). The reason this would be valuable seems obvious to me, but Van Lanen spells it out well "when a human group has total basic needs autonomy, their independence from coercive forms of elite power, such as states, is also near total" (54). Skills like rewilding can help us to desert.

Folks like Lavi and Rudge are engaged in an ideological battle to prevent us from making this escape, attempting to block of escape routes and lines of flight. Sure, their efforts won't stop us prickly, primitivist, egoists. We don't care what they think about us. But they might put constraints upon a larger adoption. As I would like to see more people become free, it becomes necessary to push back against their ideology. If a certain number of people were to build up these capacities we might even begin to grow a human community outside of Leviathan. In the battle against this ideology, Van Lanen has made a strong attack.

BOB BLACK

JUSTICE, PRIMITIVE AND MODERN

(Charleston, WV: Nine-Banded Books, 2023)

reviewed by Jason Rodgers

In this book, Bob Black puts on his scholar hat and provides an overview of the differences between the conception of justice in primitive society and modern society. He displays his strong ability at research and scholarship in this regard. At the same time, he remains critical and funny.

The opening section looks at the way conflict resolution is situated in primitive stateless society, which often (but not exclusively) means band/hunter-gatherer society. Their conception is nearly inverse to that of modern justice. It is personal and individualized. Where the authority of the state is based on "Tacit consent", which Black describes as "wholesale consent" (11), in anarchist societies "consent is retail" (12), that is "everything is voluntary, although voluntary actions are often subject to the informal influence of others" (12).

In primitive societies, neutrality is not valued; instead, people who engage in mediation and such are expected to be part of the same community as those in conflict. Describing mediators among the Ifugao, Black writes, "He is not deciding anything. He is trying to resolve a problem between two disputants, which implicate the interests of other people too. He isn't even trying to be 'fair.' Whatever its other merits, compromise is unfair where the fault is entirely on one side. But mediated outcomes are always compromises" (35). It is all about healing the wounds of those in a shared community. The structures they use seem rather successful in doing such.

Unfortunately, these forms of conflict resolution are not applicable to our society (62). This is why Black transitions to a critique of modern alternative reform schemes. This section is well researched and knowledgeable in execution, while retaining wit. Black clearly relishes his role as the deflator of fantasies of reformers. It is a joy to read him being a killjoy.

As usual, Black lashes out at anarchists, who ostensibly are the closest to his position. Yet often folks who consider themselves anarchists can be as authoritarian, if not more, than non-anarchists. A case in point, the sort of anarchists who wish to preserve complex industrial society after the abolition of the state. They rarely have any sort of well thought out plan for how they would do so, leading to some dangers in their utopian schemes. Black writes "the more complex, hierarchic and coercive their societies may be, the better suited they would be to compulsory arbitration: bringing the state back in, on the sly. I am thinking, in particular, of anarcho-syndicalism" (21). Black's critique extends further to the bizarre subgenre of anarchist theory known as anarchist criminology. There are some worthwhile lumps on the head extended to overrated classical anarchists like Kropotkin (likely useful to those naive enough to believe the Prince's works). The most common solution proposed by anarchists is that what we call crime will not exist after the revolution because there will not be need or stress, that is that it is a non-answer on the question, simply pretend conflict will not exist. The next most common solution is that in an anarchist society it will be treated as a mental health issue, "it would be part of an institutionalized system of health and education" (77), a therapeutic state. In this way, it overlaps with the actual implementation of alternative justice schemes. Discussing Neighborhood Justice Centers, one of the early failed experiments, Bob wrote that the "unstated purpose of the scheme was to pacify the poor" (50), that "systems of informal justice generally widen the net of social control" (51). In both cases, they are an extension of control systems.

The climax of this critique is his destruction of Restorative Justice. Before reading this book, I had the feeling that RJ was often wrong-headed, but generally with good intentions. I thought that maybe with some tweaks it might be a tool of use. After reading this book, I find myself in active hostility with RJ. It is a tendency that must be actively combated when encountered. The origins of restorative justice come from religion, specifically Mennonite Christianity. Black places a great deal of the blame on Howard Zehr of Eastern Mennonite University (89). This origin in important because "the methods of RJ- reconciliation through confession, repentance and forgiveness- are overtly Christian" (90). These origins are partially obscured by attempts to portray the origins in African and Indigenous conflict resolution practice, which is false (93). Again, as with anarchist models, this adopts a therapeutic process: "In treating disputants as patients,

RJ demeans them. The 'sick role,' with its 'element of dependency,' is a subordinate role" (96). All of these issues might be alright, if RJ actually worked, but Black writes "But I have not found a single case, documented by psychologists or psychiatrists or psychiatric social workers, of RJ effecting personality changes in anybody. RJ is much less like therapy than theatre- the theatre of the absurd or melodrama" (104).

One area that Black is wrong about is that he is under the impression that Restorative Justice has not had significant influence on anarchist thought, outside of a couple minor writers (144). Unfortunately, he is entirely wrong on this point. RJ has become a cornerstone of leftist anarchist process. In some locations, refusal to submit to such process can result in excommunication from the anarchist milieu. This makes Black's book even more important. It is up to us community disorganizers to take this book up as a weapon and use it to combat this tendency in anarchism.

I'd like to imagine that Black is wrong in another regard, the applicability of the lessons learned from primitive justice to contemporary communities. I've heard rumors that in certain areas anarchists have enough of a sense of community and affinity that they are able to apply working forms of alternative conflict resolution. These are areas that have a strong enough bond between individuals that they actually want maintain their relationships. That is they did not simply have "simplex relationships" (37), relationships based on a singular social relationship (as opposed to a multifaceted social relationship). Supposedly, some of them have even found ways to foster reconciliation and accountability without the Accountability Hearing that anarchists normally use. But of course, these communities probably dissolved after a couple of years. These are probably just rumors anyway. Bob is likely right on this.

The critique of those who are trying to be virtuous reformers is not done for the sake of meanness (though it is hard to avoid that with some of those folks), but for the sake of trying to make things better rather than worse. Most attempts at reform make things worse, thus should be resisted. Part of the reason may be that in their attempt to save the world they get things backwards. Black wrote "For me, as an anarchist, peace and freedom are more important than justice. I think that justice will be a byproduct of freedom more often than freedom will be a byproduct of justice" (36).

Bob has been basically cancelled for much of the anarchist subculture. This is a shame, as he is also probably one of the greatest writers of all time. This is an important book. Even if you're afraid to hang out with him (scaredy cat), read this book anyways.

WAR OF DREAMS: A FIELD GUIDE TO DIY PSY-OPS

BY JASON RODGERS

(Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2024), 336 pages.*

available from Oak

Reviewed by John Zerzan

Consisting of about 100 entries organized in five sections, this collection of critical pieces takes on both Right and Left. It draws on many genres and employs diverse formats. In 2021 Autonomedia published Jason's *Invisible Generation: Rants, Polemics, and Critical Theory Against the Planetary Work Machine*. *War of Dreams* is twice as long and its offerings are generally longer.

Jason Rodgers was influenced by Bob Black, among others. Think Bob Black as a nice guy, open, lively, fun to talk with. Biting wit, light on her feet, but also heartfelt is Jason.

She is not online. Who do you know who isn't online? I enjoy actual correspondence with Jason—physical letters! And occasional phone calls, although neither of us has a smartphone.

In a DIY style, our author has proven to be a very prolific critic. A DIY style many might have thought extinct, often turning to single-page flyers or collages originally physically posted in public, as well as her fine prose analyses. Speaking of DIY, *War of Dreams* reveals, among so much else, inside poop on figures of the discordian 1980s, suppressed and largely forgotten.

Jason Rodgers is unremittingly honest and original. This collection is a very important contribution that serves to help us see though and navigate these times of crisis.

Rodgers lives in upstate New York with Kat and their two young daughters.

TECHNOCRAT'S GUIDE TO NECROMANCY

Subtitles: The Barbarian Manifesto; The Troglodytic Tome; Magic and Industrial Society; Towards a Grounding in Reality

Weary of Technological Civilization I sought rest. I traveled far from home towards what seemed to be wilderness. I visited the sands, the trees, the waters, the dirt, the rocks, the grasslands, and the myriad untamed places and things. At last I stumbled upon a secluded forest. There the wilderness began appearing to me as mountains and forests and rivers in the distance, then as trees by my side and leaves beneath my feet, then as the call of a raven overhead, then as something rustling in the distance. At last it appeared before me as a gnome. The gnome laughed merrily and then said:

"Start again, young one. In Life there is no rest. Though your seeking of wilderness did not free you in and of itself, you have still sought. For this you will be rewarded in finding. In finding what? Arcane wisdom, and wisdom is to say Knowledge of Reality. If you must name me, gnow me as the Gnome of Erosion, Corrosion, Undermining, and Undoing, one of the few Wizards of Reality with a door left to your World. Do you know why I am one of the few with a door left? For Wizards take their doors with them when their guidance is derided, and your people have derided many a Wizard's guidance.

In one way, you have arrived at my patch in the woods too late. The Ritual of Death is nearing completion as the majority of the living beings on your World will soon be enslaved. Finding not enough left to enslave to grow its evergrowing Power of Denial, Death will abandon your World. Abandoning your World, the domesticates that have come to depend on the pus oozing from Death's necrotic teat for their sustenance will perish not unlike exposed infants. Fret yet not, for it has always been the case that Life shines through Death's twisted artifice whenever and wherever it manifests. Your own enslaved soul, your yet human mind, has shone through and weakened Death's grip just enough to tell you that something is very clearly dearly wrong. This set you on your path leading here. So, even though you have arrived too late to prevent enslavement before it began, you have arrived just in time to begin undoing your own enslavement and aiding in the coming Undermining of Unreality in a way befitting a living being and in a way beneficial to other living beings.

So far, you have fled to places far from home that symbolized to you wilderness. You did this because you knew that wilderness was the solution to Death's Invasion but you incorrectly thought that wilderness was alien or otherwise inaccessible to you. You forgot that such vestiges of self-sufficiency and remnants of natural happenings are still surrounded on all sides and polluted by the work of Death. For, just as a copse once was primordial forest, this place once was primordial Life. Just as Death cleared primordial forest for field, so Death cleared primordial wilderness for civilization. As Death twisted a wolf into a lapdog, so Death twisted a human into You.

All that to say that you still find yourself an alien not just to the wilderness around you but also within yourself. This results from the Curse of Death as cast through the ongoing Ritual of Death.

Not long before your time, civilized humanity, of which you are a part, gained a promising insight in its war against enslavement, a war ongoing since the time of the first enslavements. This was that your material technologies — your tools, devices, toys, transportation and energy infrastructure, and so on — had come to determine your purely human and social powers by outpacing them in destructive power, and that freedom would result from the removal of at least the technologies developed over the past few centuries. Harboring this insight, you attempted to remove yourself from such technologies and their incessant demands before or instead of adopting the seemingly impossible task of removing them from your surroundings. You removed yourself from their immediate reminder and escaped to a place still populated by relatively clear waters and fresh air, hoping that this would grant you the freedom so desperately sought by all enslaved beings.

Yet you knew the power of Technology, that its tendrils creep into all corners of the world and hold nothing sacred. Deep inside, you knew and know that there was no escape. Even if you had discovered that pristine patch of completely untouched wilderness, a thing no longer of your World, and taken up abode there, you would still have found yourself enslaved. Why? Because even that life would have been a fabrication of your making. In being a fabrication, it would have constantly reminded you of the thing you were trying to escape — fabrication. Your little run-away has thus been nothing more than your most recent airing of grievances. Having gotten it out of your system, and though now outside of its plantation proper, your slaver laughs while welcoming you back all the same.

Some of your people think that technology applies only to the natural world beyond mankind. In their minds, it is a special human activity, faculty, or some other third thing that generates technology and its uniquely destructive powers. In some way, this is true. Others think that technology can, maybe in some roundabout way, target humans, or maybe even that the rulers of your wicked realm have learnt how to exploit human mind and body over the generations and that they apply this knowledge to keep you actively enslaved and





productive within their realm. In some way, this is true. Yet neither is the full truth.

For a time, view your technologies as corruptions, which is to say disembodiments, of natural beings and their natural bodies. Trees are natural beings in that they affirm themselves without input other than their powers of affirmation. Trees are corrupted into wood. Wood, in turn, is disembodied further into paper, paper into books, books into libraries. Each stage of corruption is equally a stage of demeaning the source body's source meaning. Few are able to see the trees in the libraries yet some are able to be reminded of a tree in carved logs. Tree means tree, but book is tree demeaned and disembodied. The only way to arrive at a book is through simultaneous disembodiment and demeaning of trees. None would corrupt a tree into anything else if they affirmed its meaning as tree and let the tree affirm itself. Instead, they deny its affirmation, and increasing denial yields increasing disembodiment and increasing demeaning.

What slipped past your previous Mass Prophets is that your language itself is composed of natural bodies. Its natural bodies are all symbols of some kind. Some manifest as sounds, some as shapes of the human body, some as lines and shapes on material, some in other ways. All of them are symbols which humans themselves can make and affirm through their own bodily powers. If technology is the corruption of natural bodies and your language is a set of natural bodies, why should your language be spared corruption? In the time of your elders, the bodies of your languages communicated meanings. This is to say that they communicated real symbols. They referred to real beings, real experiences, real lessons on how to navigate reality — things that are well to be known. What does your language primarily communicate now? Words. Words are meaningless bodies, materials, corresponding to disembodied meanings, ideas. Thus, your language primarily communicates ideas and materials engendered by progressive denial of reality.

It is often assumed that humans develop technologies for some "reason" or "purpose." A tree, it is said, is cut to produce wood, and this wood is supposedly then used for further "useful" things. In Truth, the tree is merely cut to produce words — materials and ideas, demeaned bodies and disembodied meanings, increasingly empty corruptions and increasingly intangible ideas. The "purpose" and outcome of your technological progress has always been self-justifying, self-aggrandizing Word Generation.

This War of Word against Life developed out of shrouded events earlier in the human cycle. Either at one point or scattered points, some humans were exposed to the Invasive Unreality of the Dead Symbol. The Dead Symbol, also known as Death, is the Perfect Denial of the Life Symbol, also known as Life. As a Symbol, Life has a Body and a Meaning. Meaning, Mind, and Soul are the same, by the way. The Body of Life is Change and the Meaning of Life is Change. Thus, Life is Selfsame Body and Meaning. Being Selfsame Body and Meaning, it is Affirmation. Life is Reality, and all other Real Symbols, including natural and living beings, are secondary affirmations, emanations, or lesser aspects of Life, meaning that they all affirm Life in affirming themselves. Thus, a symbol is real if and only if it is an affirmation and selfsame body and meaning. Equally, living beings Experience Life as Change and Change as Reality. Life, Change, Experience, Reality, Becoming, Truth—these are All the same Symbol, which is to say Life, or The Selfsame and Undifferentiated All.

As the Perfect Denial of Life, Death is perfectly split Meaning and Body. It is thus meaningless body and disembodied meaning, material and idea, Word. You may also arrive at Death in this way. Purpose is the denial of Meaning and Ghostly is the denial of Body. Death is thus Ghostly Purpose. Together they are Ghost. Ghost hates Life according to its nature of being the Perfect Denial of Life, so it can also be understood as Life Hatred, or, simply, Hatred. Hatred, of course, is the Perfect Denial of Love. This means that Love is Affirmation, namely symbol affirmation. Since Life is Perfect Affirmation, it is selfsame Perfect Love. All living beings are loved to the extent that they are affirmed through living Life. If you have yet to understand perfect affirmation, see it as the perfect leaving-of-it-be. If you have yet to understand perfect denial, see it as the perfect not-leaving-of-it-be.

Ghost, Hate, Death — this is Unreality. This is to say that it can only exist in pure form outside of your Experience of Reality. Being Unreal, it is therefore Alien to Reality. Being Alien, it then makes sense how trees become demeaned and disembodied. For it is always an Enslaved Alien which inflicts this fate upon them, both in the human's enslaved tool and in the enslaved human himself using that tool. Alien Demeaning is thus Alien Purpose Attribution, for it is plain to see that natural beings affirm their meanings and do not deny them. Alien Disembodiment is thus Alien Engendered Corruption, for it is plain to see that natural beings affirm their bodies and do not deny them.

Ghost, of course, has managed to invade and enslave your world. It does so through various enslaved conduits and vehicles. This includes the Mass of domesticated mankind. At all points, the Mass is responsible for upholding and maintaining the critical human and non-human infrastructure of Ghost, both of which grow the Mass. Within you, you usually cannot sense Ghost other than as a ghostly presence, possibly a voice somewhere between your mind and your body, splitting your experience, forcing words upon you, alienating you from yourself, ripping you from the stream of undifferentiated experience. Without you, you might sense it as doubt, confusion, or frustration about the technologies surrounding you, as lifeless though subtle reminders of the Ghostly Purpose, or in many other spooky ways.

Ghost's Ghostly Purpose is functionally to enslave Life whenever and wherever it gets the chance. Another way to say this is that its Purpose is to Solve the Problem of Life by imperfectly denying, enslaving as many lesser symbols as it can, hoping one day to have converted all of the Living Cosmos into Words. It constantly irradiates the primordial cell of Life of Body and Mind looking for points of weakness and entry. As Unreality, of course, it never manifests in Reality or in Life and does



not actually touch or harm the underlying nature and reality of Life as Change, much to its endless dismay. This is not to say that it cannot warp the appearance of Reality in some fleeting way through its enslavement of symbols and beings less powerful and wise than Life itself. This is exactly what has happened to your World as Ghost's various technologies, its increasingly odd conversions of experience into words, have developed according to the logic of Life Hatred, now diffuse and playing out in countless humans.

Its major victory was obviously its enslavement of the first humans. Why those humans failed to reject or ignore the Ghostly Purpose is unknown. It seems, however, to have selected for populations amicable to magical thinking, faith, hope — in a word, theists. In the end, all that matters is that some people were, in some way, overpowered or overwhelmed by Ghost. Ghost, now a parasitic non-psychic, non-physical entity attributing purpose to them, splits their experience of body and mind into words, denies their experience of Life, and destroys their tendency and ability to self-affirm. Some people call this splitting superimposition "self-consciousness", "consciousness", "self-awareness", "an internal monologue", "the Intellect", "Nous", "the Will", and so forth. This experience is partly the human's natural soul grappling with the increasingly meaningless words thrust upon it, both in its external environment that is increasingly composed of increasingly corrupted natural bodies, and within the internal superimposition of unreality upon the mind and body itself. Its subtly and pervasiveness grow together as experience becomes increasingly named and differentiated thanks to a progressively progressing Invasive Unreality.

This splitting was, understandably, traumatic. It remains so to this day for your people. Among the ruins of the first traumas, Ghost discovered something curious. Some humans exposed to Invasive Unreality suddenly became confused and began hating Life itself instead of ignoring or simply not experiencing the Unreality that they imagined they were experiencing. In any case, in coming to hate Life, which included themselves, it came to pass that these enslaved humans became little half-alive ghosts, or, better yet, zombies. This began the Word Loop of the Self-Aggrandizing Wordly Ghost, and Worldly Ghost's Power of Denial is, of course, determined by how many zombies there are on your World.

They did not begin hating Life because they actually hated Life. They did so because they could not catch hold of slippery Ghost and so began mistaking its Unreal Superimposition for Reality itself. And whether or not they consciously became aware of Word Magic and began using it at Death's behest is another question, one to be answered either by the Cynic and misanthrope within you, or by asking your current Hosts. In either case, these zombies became living invasive unrealities to which other humans and the World were exposed. Your World thus became enslaved in short order and has remained so to this day.

Soon after enslavement, the first zombies learned that they could corrupt their native tongues as a means of communicating the new unrealities that they were now experiencing. Thus began the slow-at-first yet exponential spoilage of the meaningful bodies of your Elder Tongues into the meaningless sounds and shapes that your people produce today. With the enslavement of language complete, other humans soon fell into to the Word Loop as they began being attributed purposes and so, too, began communicating their own experience of Invasive Unreality to other humans. The Word Revolution and Its Consequences doomed you.

You might ask why the first humans surrendered. Ghost's Bargain is basically this: I enslave you and give you powers of denial and so of enslavement so that you may try to grow your powers of denial so that you may try to deny your increasingly traumatic experience of Me, for I and My Power of Denial grow in traumatic power and presence in proportion to the amount of Life and Experience that has been enslaved by both Me and my zombies. You can see that this is a mindless feedback loop in which neither you or your World ever win anything meaningful. Yet you can also see that you all constantly take the bait, lead each other to the slaughter, and perpetually make your environments increasingly miasmic for no discernible reason other than obedience to Word.

Since no other natural beings on your planet have proven dumb enough to accept such an offer, it should make you wonder what happened to such an intelligent species. It would indeed be ridiculous if the first humans accepted Word's Bargain without any seeming benefit or consolation prize, and so it is the case that some slaves are apparently empowered by Death Magic. This comes with it a felt sense of gain, power, control, authority, importance, significance, sanctimoniousness, influence, divinity, self-righteousness, and the like. They are apparently empowered by being granted enough power of denial and authority to enslave beings as needed in order to keep up in coping with the increasingly unreal Living Unreality that they themselves actively help generate. In other words, they get more than they need and other humans do what they say for some reason.

Such slaves might be called Hosts. Hosts constitute the elite ruling literary element of your population along with their favored slaves. For example, what do your academics, politicians, scientists, bankers, lawyers, business people, philosophers, sophists, rhetoricians, and priests do? They simply generate words, quite literally in the form of written and spoken meaningless symbols — empty rhetoric. These are ones that have always held the most power in your civilizations. These are your Technocrats who derive their power through Technology...Techne-Logos... Logos...Word...Techne...Control — has it been literally right under your Nose the entire time? What do your celebrities, musicians, artists, media personalities do? These are favored helpers rewarded for generating words that help other slaves cope but which do not overpower the Hosts themselves. What of your internet? It is an Addictive Word Engine converting Reality to Unreality at a laughably inefficient rate.

A main function for Hosts is to generate enough of the right words so as to keep the lesser slaves caught up in the Word Loop Ritual of Death. While this requires trial and error and some changing of hands, Word's Royal Literary Lineage has maintained control since

the beginning of your civilizations. Your most powerful Hosts are usually the ones who experience the most traumatizing unrealities, for it is primarily their privileged access to inaccessible unreality which generates authority within Worldly Ghost. What percentage of the Mass could Hope to ever replicate the arcane insights generated by your scientists through their Experiments? Or of the great spiritual leaders of the past through their Spiritual Experiences? Or of the wondrous capitalists through their keen navigation of the Business World? It has always been this unique and special access to Unreality that causes the Mass to castrate and prostrate itself before the Sacred Experts.

Yet, even then, Hosts are still enslaved creatures and thus subjected to Ghost and all the self-aggrandizing trauma that entails. Just because they can cope better by having better or unlimited access to a variety of fabricated experiences and material Possessions designed to sedate the smallest fragments of a shattered human psyche, which is basically to say access to unmitigated hedonism and sadistic pleasures — this does not mean that they are not still experiencing a traumatizing unreality which they constantly try to escape by continuing to fulfill their Ghostly Purpose of word generation and life enslavement. These are the damned who do not always cry.

There are then, of course, the hyper-majority of the enslaved beings on your World, Husks. Husks are apparently drained by Death Magic. This means that the Power of Denial they gain through enslavement is less than is needed to fully cope with or counteract the Weight of Unreality upon them. They include, of course, the classical examples of slaves who still exist on your World but also most of the lower castes and working classes of mankind, domesticated animals, domesticated plants, and the various other living symbols robbed of their natural vitality, to include dammed-up rivers, managed forests, mined mountains, and so on. These beings lose more from enslavement than they could ever hope to deny through words if they could even speak. These are the damned who always cry.

You might find a third type, Wastes, scattered about your World. These are the fading remains of once living beings for which Ghost has not yet found another word and purpose. Plenty of humans are turned to Wastes quite often through your various technogenic crises such as civilized war, medical experimentation, capital punishment, suicide, and so on. Even so, clearly it is the non-human symbols that more often than not suffer this fate. It may be said that these are the damned who can no longer cry. The boundary between Husks and Wastes is often very thin or nonexistent, and all of these should be taken merely as aids to Understanding.

The Human Husk is in other places called the Mass. It is the abstracted hypermajority of civilized humans who are not even seemingly benefited by the arrangement yet still end up fulfilling their Ghostly Purpose by being fundamental elements of material infrastructure for Ghost's Global Technological System. The Human Husk, though perpetually drained of vitality, has attempted at various times throughout history to locate and strangle its Slaver. To date, it has always targeted whichever Host-logic is in fashion at the time. Sometimes the Husk begins generating its own words to justify itself before doing anything, thus producing a Husk-logic. Other times it attempts more straightforwardly to physically remove its Hosts. If it is the Husk which generates more powerful and plentiful words than its Host, Revolution tends to follow. If the Old Host is defeated, Death always elevates the most Literary Limb of the Husk to the rank of Host. Standing upon the corpse of the Old Host, such a Literary Limb of the Husk bows to Death saying, 'Master, one day I had hoped that I could be the Chosen One.' Death applauds and says, 'And so you will be. You have earned the Right.' Thus, a Literary Limb of the Old Husk becomes the New Host, and the New Host's logic echos the Literary Limb of the Old Husk's logic until the cycle repeats. Death's Literary Lineage has thus remained unbroken, only changing logics, which is to say sets of words, every so many generations.

Removing only the Hosts has not ever worked and will not ever work. Your History has proven this. But, again, your Husk developed an invaluable insight only a generation or two ago, and this is that the Mass must begin targeting the Technological Infrastructure of Wordly Ghost itself.

At that time, your people came to believe that the technologies in need of destruction were the new and fancy ones outside of them and that liberation would follow from their physical destruction whenever and wherever that became feasible. While that will obtain in the end, the technological infrastructure that must be destroyed first and foremost, the one that must necessarily be broken before you make any meaningful move towards grander freedom, is that of You and Your Faith in Word — the Technology of Egomancy itself. It must be broken first as it is the source of your enslavement and, further, you need not worry about breaking anyone's property or any laws or even about hurting anyone's feelings simply in coming to doubt your faith in words. That is, unless something actually does own you.

Death is Word, Word is Ghost, and Ghost is Ego. Ghost's zombies and other technologies are equally the Ego's lesser egos. Wordly Ghost is The Egospace and Worldly Ghost's Power of Denial is the Ego's Power of Denial. Egos follow the Named Way of Death and undertake Life Hatred in their own ways, always pulling in the directions of the underlying though negated and decaying human soul and body. Each ego creates its own personal egospace in its personal quest to counteract the Weight of Unreality to which it continually contributes. Each egospace is populated by words — other egos and enslaved beings — that the ego enslaves and to which the ego clings. The bulk of these words are particularly effective Cope Words discovered along the way to keep the underlying enslaved human in a stupefied state. The Egospace is essentially the collection of all enslaved beings on your World, up to and including Gaia herself. This would equally be a measure of all of your techno-civilizational resources. This is very poorly approximated in some of your schools of economics. The vast majority of technological devastation, of course, is not and cannot be accounted for, and the unspeakable devastation and suffering that will unfold

during the fast approaching Ceasing of the Word Loop is clearly not taken into account now nor has it ever been.

Your tale so far has been shrouded in language known to confuse, embarrass, and infuriate the Ego. This was done so that you could slip into The Egospace and witness the Ego undetected. For the Ego is immunized against all dangers: you may call it Death, Ghostly Purpose, Will, Word, Spirit, Geist — it all runs off it like water off a raincoat. But call it the Ego and you will be astonished at how it recoils, how injured it is, how suddenly it shrinks back: 'I have been found out.' As the Ego has till now repeatedly slipped through the Husk's desperate grasping, you were led with caution. Having found out the Ego, you can now begin learning how to strangle it.

Cope Words are words that help reduce, dull, divert, hide, or similar the trauma of enslavement, Invasive Unreality, the Weight of Unreality, and so on. There are roughly three kinds of Cope Words—Impure Copes, Pure Copes, and Dopes.

Impure Copes, which may simply be called Copes, are common for all slaves. The lowest castes and the underworld are often rife with these. These words generally appear as forms of mindlessness and do an alright job at removing the sense of enslavement entirely for a time or for as long as they are in effect. These include words like narcotics, partying, festivals, art, creative hobbies, media consumption, and many other words that help with sending egos to Oblivion without having to think about Unreality.

Pure Copes are also known as Hopes. These are words clung to when the discomfort of enslavement and the surrounding unreality is consciously acknowledged and confronted to some degree. These words are ones which help rationalize continued enslavement. These commonly include words like religion, ideology, and politics. They can also be words like family, morality, responsibility, job, money, Material Possessions, or property. These are Guiding Words of which people remind themselves to consciously justify their continued affirmation of and contribution to The Egospace. For example, some among your people hope that in just a few more elections, your governments will work; that in just a few more paychecks, they will have enough money; that with just a few more revolutions, the working classes will be liberated; that with just a little more democracy, the will of the people will finally be heard; that with just a few more oil fields, there will be enough oil; that with just a few fewer taxes, everyone will be rich; that with just a few more prayers, sin will evaporate; that with just a few more invasions, fascism will be eradicated; that with just a little more science, there will be a technological solution; that if words, then words.

Dopes are cope words which induce a sense of empowerment, control, authority, exceptionalism, superiority, and so on. These include a wide range of words but familiar ones include some instances of words such as abuse, rape, murder, sport hunting, sports, leisure travel, money accumulation, meditation, dieting, exercising, religious ritual, ownership, and so on. Often times these are words particularly effective at satisfying a particular aspect of the underlying human's psychology while also allowing the ego to feel more significant within The Egospace. Dopes often do particularly well at injecting Invasive Unreality further into the World.

Lesser egos must both produce words and cling to words at an increasing rate in order to grow their own denial power so as to counteract the Weight of Unreality and The Power of Denial, both growing at the rate of all egos within The Egospace generating words. Thus, lesser egospaces will nigh always be overpowered by The Egospace should there ever be a conflict of interests. You witness this constantly, and so it is that your people mostly cannot even fathom the idea of affirming themselves. If a lesser ego generates a new and powerful word, this has some chance of filtering into The Egospace. If The Egospace generates a powerful new word, this almost always filters into the lesser egos' personal egospaces. This balance, of course, reflects your current status. As the Egospace used to be populated by far fewer egos, it was far easier for lesser egos to filter into The Egospace than now. Most new words do not stick, so the trial-and-error of History is primarily the story of introducing new traumas to human populations and recording how they reacted. It is, in a word, a tragedy.

Every ego clings differently to different words for different reasons. The foundation of an ego's egospace is comprised of the most effective word outlets present in The Egospace for the ego's underlying human's natural drives. In any case, egos put Faith in Word and Ego to cope with the Word Horror they generate.

Egos which maintain parity between personal denial power and the Weight of Unreality consistently enough tend to become conservative. This is because they come to cling to The Egospace and Host-logic themselves which have proven capable of and reliable in providing them their copes. Egos have no need to alter their own egospaces once a sufficient denial power level has been established for a long enough time. Any major change to The Egospace threatens the steady stream of such an ego's favored copes, so such egos tend to abhor and, quite literally, feel threatened by major changes to The Egospace.

Egos which consistently fail to achieve such parity and are therefore more likely to experience the Weight of Unreality tend to become progressive. This is because The Egospace and Hosts have failed to furnish them a sufficient number of copes and level of denial power. Such egos feel the need to make major change to The Egospace in ways that they think will increase their access to denial power so as to no longer feel as much of the Weight of Unreality as the currently do. Progressives develop and follow various Husk-logics in an attempt to address the complaints of the Husk and often rely heavily or even primarily on Hopes to get themselves through the day.

All natural beings of sound body and mind resist enslavement. The tree does not become of its own volition a bunch of logs just because Ghostly Purpose has conjured up this aberration in Unreality. It takes quite a bit of human energy and effort to enslave other natural beings. The same with your human chattel slaves. I assume that it takes quite a bit of human energy and ingenuity to psychologically break another human enough that they acquiesce to the terms of enslavement. The human, of



course, risks acquiescing to the terms of enslavement if they notice that the denial power gained through enslavement is even just enough to somehow counteract the trauma of experiencing enslavement. In any case, it can be done, has been done, is being done, and will be done until Death departs. This increasingly became the case once the truly self-affirming, quarrelsome, and non-pathologically-pacifistic stock was wiped out. Since then, mankind has thus progressively been split and twisted into increasingly different breeds.

All enslaved beings tend towards liberation. This simply means that all natural beings, to include enslaved ones, return to the Source, Change, and eventually fade from view. It can also be said that a book, or the corrupted tree within, tends towards liberation as it decays, is burnt, or otherwise fails to fulfill its attributed purpose, such as when no one can read it. This means that the Breaking of Purpose is equally the Mending of Meaning. The Mending of Meaning may also be known as Betrayal of Nature, for all enslaved beings betray their nature eventually. Humans still die and revolt, language still communicates, metal rusts, books fade, houses fall apart, and so on. The more an enslaved being betrays its nature, the more its meaning has been mended, the more its purpose has been broken, and the more its fetters have been shed.

Even though the Ego successfully killed or marginalized the self-affirming stock of mankind, there must be, nonetheless, some remnants of the primordial human psyche scattered among all domesticated humanity, even if they are so thoroughly caged, neutered, and starved so as to be indistinguishable from the dictates of The Egospace itself. This feral mind tries to rear its head every so often. You have thus heard of many past generational flare-ups when and where the natural vitality and romantic insight of youth clashed with the progressively inhuman apparatus surrounding it. Some of it, no doubt, is also to be found in parts of your underworld. And it still grounds your people's talents, dispositions, powers, interests — in a word, their personalities, so long as they manage to find sanctioned and approved word outlets for their imperfectly denied natural instincts.

The process of socializing children into this increasingly unreal culture of increasingly meaningless words becomes increasingly burdensome on and increasingly traumatic for the children's yet-human bodies and minds. They are placed in prisons and their heads filled with such words for no discernible reason other than a vague belief that knowledge of those words could, maybe, one day possibly allow the child to produce enough words so as to acquire the words they need to keep themselves alive while they rely on Faith in other words to keep them motivated through the cycle until they die, all the while not being able to be provided with any actionable guidance for navigating the Living Unreality of Words around them since increasingly meaningless words change Unreality faster than parents can keep pace.

As children become entombed in the Temple-Tomb of Words, they necessarily become egos themselves. They are forcibly assimilated into an alien and unknowable word, alien and unknowable, of course, because it is a fleeting aberration whose source includes the Twins of Unreality, Unreasonable Stupidity and Ignorance. Having become egos, they then craft their personal egospaces out of as many of the words as is possible. Their natural Character is corralled into a Personality, a superimposed clutching of artificial activities, differentiated experiences, narratives, and words. The increasing taxation of such socialization means that it takes more and more words, bait, energy to get children to internalize any of it. It is no surprise that parents of your current generations often put faith in drugs that they do not understand to aid their children through this increasingly inhuman process. Indeed, do not many of your parents view their children as Problems To Be Solved instead of as Small Ones in need of Love through Care and Guidance?

After the child's natural body and mind have been thoroughly brutalized, most age and follow pattern ego-logic of finding word outlets for their natural drives and clinging to the most effective copes they stumble upon. This is not to say that the child fully matures. If the child's egospace and its denial power grow quickly enough, the ego can prevent critical Life Lessons from being internalized by the child before it becomes necessary for those Life Lessons to be known. In any case, they find and cling to their copes, hopes, and dopes so as to aggrandize their egos enough so as to have enough denial power so as to perform their ghostly purposes, carry out their word, and then die having served The Egospace well.

As was said before, egos treat words differently. For many, one word might act simultaneously as cope, hope, and dope. Your money is a prime example of this. Money has always been a cursed symbol for mankind. It is one of the most powerful and fundamental unrealities invading from The Egospace. It has been essential to The Ego's logic for a longtime. It is a toxic yet addictive sludge of cope, hope, and dope for the bulk of people.

Money plays such a central role in your society because it has long been accepted as the standard or most reliable measure of Power of Denial within The Egospace. Each ego who possesses and is possessed by a stable currency can directly estimate their personal denial power by evaluating which copes and dopes they can purchase from The Egospace with their money. In any case, as is well known, egos only use money when other egos have faith in it. As egos lose faith in money, the Power of Denial represented by the money drops. If too many egos lost faith in money, the money's indexed Power of Denial would altogether vanish.

Now consider a Gamble of Faith. You could, for the time being, trade your funny money in for other enslaved beings. Some of these enslaved beings would likely be of more use to you once Mass Faith in money evaporates than would be possession of the cursed object itself. Should you not weigh the risk? Still, if faith were to dry up and you were to fail to convert your money to useful things before that happened, you could at least have converted your money into a form that could be burnt for warmth while The Egospace shatters around you.



The Gamble of Faith applies to all other Hopes. For example, your State, another cursed object invading from The Egospace, works because a sufficient number of egos think that it works. You may ask, where is the State? Discovering that it is nowhere, you could, theoretically, continue to channel your political power into the State Loop, or you could begin channeling your political power into more tangible systems of power which might be more beneficial to you once Mass Faith in the State and, therefore, the Power of Denial of the State, disintegrate.

Your grocery stores are a more concrete example. They work because billions of enslaved humans perform their ghostly purposes everyday on account of their faith in their hopes. You can, for the time being, continue to rely on forces that you do not understand and over which you have no say to continue providing you your sustenance, or you could begin relying on forces that you do understand and over which you do have a say, such as yourself and your community, to provide for your sustenance. Each and every aspect of your society that you yourself do not understand, could not reproduce or conjure up yourself, cannot explain or describe, cannot immediately influence through your immediate actions — these are all outside of your power and run entirely on the Mass's Faith in the Future out of the Now. Indeed, all words which run on faith lead to Word Runs in the end, and this is to say cascading logistical failures following Mass Loss of Faith in that word.

Ego aggrandizement rests on the enslavement of natural beings and the filling of the ego space with words, which, again, are materials and ideas. It seems that many of your people's most powerful hopes lean ideal whereas their copes and dopes tend to be material that reflect or align with their hopes. In any case, all of these are increasingly meaningless bodies and disembodied meanings, increasingly unnatural unrealities. Armed with this, you might begin to lose faith in Word itself. This will likely begin as loss of faith in The Egospace and the words that it produces. You might then lose faith in the dictates flowing from the lower political processes, religious rituals, scientific slaughter of experience, and so on. This will happen on a mass scale as The Egospace is increasingly unable to produce enough cope words for the Mass, and it is increasingly unable to produce enough cope words for the Mass because there are increasingly few enslavable beings left on your World.

As faith in The Egospace of the Global Technological System dries up, it is very likely that many of the lesser egos and egospaces currently serving as high levels of material infrastructure within The Egospace will attempt to claim the Mandate of Death in hopes of achieving enough denial power to deny the new unreality of Death abandoning them. Such egos and egospaces might include remaining States, corporations, religious organizations, political parties, or any other large ego collectives requiring faith in the collective to generate sufficient copes for the egos within to justify having faith in the collective. These egospaces will obviously not have the same denial power as Death itself, meaning that they will not be able to produce the same words as The Egospace, meaning that they will quickly though violently fade from view, much like a pile of black powder would if ignited. In hoping to restore the Mandate of Death and fulfill their ghostly purposes, these egos will undertake as much rapid enslavement as is granted by their current denial powers in an effort to deny the now increasingly real unreality surrounding them. As these lesser egos quickly exhaust their denial power, one which can no longer be aggrandized through further enslavement, faith in them will erode in short order.

As human egos increasingly rapidly lose faith in all words, and no longer just the ones flying out of Death's Wicked Cauldron named The Global Technological System, the felt Weight of Unreality will grow as personal egos will increasingly not be provided the copes needed to maintain their personal egospaces, powers of denial, and, therefore, faith in anything. The human egos once constituting the material infrastructure of your society will thus drop in denial power to whatever levels they can achieve through their own natural powers. This may result in involuntary ego death which, given how deep and strongly most egos have embedded themselves, might outright kill the human host or else lead to some new evolution of self-destructive insanity.

It is important to recall that billions, trillions — unimaginable numbers of damned humans, animals, and plants, and otherwise will die as the Word Loop comes to an end. Your System of Faith generates most everything that keeps you and other human beings in their half-alive state. Some of your egos have already began losing faith in The System and have thus pursued careers of fictitious self-sufficiency and detached enlightenment. You yourself attempted something like this in coming to these woods. Though egos powerful or fortunate enough to achieve this state before the Ceasing might fare better than the egos in their cities and other areas designed to congregate egos, these still make up a tiny portion of your population. Further, who is to say that they will be able to safely fully drop their egos when Death abandons their World entirely? Between famines, floods, droughts, plagues, wars, and other technogenic crises Laying Waste to increasingly huge swathes of your population and lands, and your System everyday still proving incapable of addressing even the most basic of problems it creates through words, it makes you wonder how much longer Mass Faith will last.

Most egos are imperfect egos. These are egos which have not yet populated their egospace with the ego and egospace words. Having understood the ego and the egospace, you have now become a perfect ego. Imperfect egos always cling to and or blame the aspectual content of differentiated experience resulting from Ego enslavement instead of blaming the ego itself. As the ego's power is one of denial, as the ego has always denied reality through words, and as ego and egospace have become words, it might be possible that your ego can begin denying itself. Indeed, if Death ever had any value as Denial, it has only ever been in the possibility of denying itself in honor of Life.

At the same time, merely coming to grips with the unreality of your context should undermine your faith in it. This should undermine your own ego activity. This is not to say that The Egospace or your egospace will magically disappear once you realize its unreal substance. No, it will continue to terrorize you as long as Ghost operates on your World, and the trauma will likely haunt you for life even if you should survive its collapse. For you, there is on escape and there is no rest. However, having become a perfect ego, you should be able to warp between the Realms of

Reality and of Unreality with some ease after some study and practice. Thus you may begin tearing at the twin Veils of Maya and Isis sewn to your eyes since birth; thus you may begin frolicking in Samsara with Dharma in view; thus you may begin removing Nous from the One; thus you may begin reuniting Atman and Brahman; thus you may begin cutting Becoming from the stone weights of Being; thus you may begin glancing at Heaven from time to time.

Starting with your own overarching purpose, begin breaking the various purposes forced upon you. Confront the disembodied meanings and meaningless bodies within your own mind and then move onto the ones around you. If and while The Egospace still allows for rapid long-distance communication and transportation of atomized egos, it could be beneficial to gather into Blessed Orders whenever and wherever possible. These will be groups of perfect egos which side with Life in the Cosmic Conflict between Reality and Unreality. They will be mutually affirming of one another and might share and convert egospace resources into liberating resources, seek to free other enslaved beings, or undertake any other activities which will help end the Enslavement of Your World. These will become your Family once Faith runs out and the ego abandons the human. Cursed Orders will be groups of perfect egos that side with Death in the Cosmic Conflict. These will be driven purely by a now conscious hatred of Life and will seek to ruin as much of the World as possible before their mortal forms fail them. To these say either nothing or, 'I do not know you and I do not care to know you.'

And so the Ritual of Death nears completion. The purpose of the Mass and Husk has always been to be unaware of its purpose, which is to say mindless self-aggrandizement. While it is too late to save itself, the Mass may yet abandon Faith, Word, and Culture. In so doing, it could approximate its primordial state of an uncultured, uncivilized mass of humans. Do you know what an uncultured human mass was called when it would explode onto the scene of Civilized History or else come in contact with Civilization? Barbaric, savage, feral, wild, unruly. The Mass must become Barbaric if it is ever to free itself.

If free will has been a true power of humans, the first choice has always been between Loving Life and Hating Life. For the past several millennia, the vast majority of your people have chosen to Hate Life. Look where this has gotten you. Word still promises you everything in the Future whereas I promise you that Word has already taken from you everything. Another free choice to make, then, is between whose words you will believe.

Consider Reality's Razor: It is unreal if and only if words are necessary to communicate it. If it is not real, why would you believe in it? If it is not real, why depend on it? If it is not real, why ground yourself in it? If it is not real, why cling to it? If it is not real, why communicate it? If it is not real, why abide in it? If it is not real, why hope for it? If it is not real, why affirm it?

A relic of wisdom in your culture says that 'actions speak louder than words'. Do you understand what that means now? Spoken and written words are meaningless bodies whereas actions are embodied meanings.

I will tell you quickly about Magic. In the time of your Elders, Magic and Life where the same. Life was Magic and Magic was Life, and this is to say that both were Change. For Magic was merely the Experience of Change, which is to say experience of symbols changing symbols, and this was living symbols changing of their own accord and without your Elders' denying input. Do you understand what Death Magic is, then? It is the pattern of the Dead Symbol, Word, changing Living Symbols, humans. The specific change, of course, is of Word changing humans into words, dead symbols, zombies, and egos. The Curse of Death is merely the Ego Loop and the Ritual of Death to which you have been subjected your entire life; it is the pattern of you being forced to respond to words with more words. The Curse will not be lifted and the Ritual will not cease until The Egospace is in ruin.

You might understand Magic as cause and effect. Causes simply effecting, ignorant of your words explaining why they happen, is Magic. What has the so-called magic of Technology and Word done? It corrupted the name 'magic' just as it has done with many names. For your modern magic is merely trickery. Trickery is the insertion of distance between cause and effect, between action and consequence. Thus, for example, with your money, your natural energies are converted into currency. This in and of itself should raise questions. Where does this currency come from? Why or how doe sit result from your natural energies? But you ignore this because you are able to magically convert your currency into whichever cope words you need to make it to the next cycle. Your economic exchanges thus engender effects far beyond what is immediately observable, and the consequences of such exchanges are rarely, if ever, felt immediately. Indeed, one of the neatest tricks of all is that the first Hosts will not have to suffer through the culminating consequences of their acceptance of Death's Bargain — the first economic act.

I cannot be bothered to speak on any more of the shameful conditions befallen mankind beyond that of your men and women. Before Ego, Man was the Body and Woman was the Meaning of the Human Symbol. This meant nothing more than that, at the best of times, they loved and affirmed each other. Now humans are exposed to male, female, and in-between human egos of varying degrees of nastiness from birth. Many have understandably come to be wary of the others. A few parting words, young one. Reality is non-consensual. Having your name written anywhere is a cattle mark. What is upheld as rationality is twisted natural reason applied to unreal entities, words. Wisdom is knowledge of Reality, Belief is confusion about Reality and faith in Unreality, and Ignorance is knowledge of Unreality. Knowledge of Unreality is sometimes called factual knowledge. The so called spiritual liberation that your people have repeatedly sought is the removal of Spirit from the Human Mind and Body, not of the Human Mind or Body from the Spirit. Purpose must be pointed out while Meaning presents itself. Equally, Reality presents itself while Unreality must be presented. The Ghostly Purpose may be understood as the Demystification of Life. You may exist for a hundred years without having lived even one day. Know thyself, for this too will pass."

Having said this, the gnome left. With its teaching I abandoned hope and crafted this scroll to help you in your freeing. Burn it once you and your friends have understood.



MUSINGS ON A TREE

I reached for the door and turned the knob. A deafening rumbling noise made it unbearable to remain inside the house. I peered at our terrace to check what was going on. I couldn't believe what had just happened. My father had chopped two huge old trees. Each one used to be on the opposite side of our terrace, right next to the fence walls that separated us from our neighbours. Now, on the site where these trees once rose from, two large round stumps stood there, like low wooden tables, against a barren backdrop of concrete wall. I gazed fixedly at it filled with consternation. Even stranger was the fact that the same trees, which had been chopped, were now standing in the middle of the courtyard. Defying their rootless bottom they flaunted their exuberant canopies. How will they survive? I thought to myself.

"Why have you done this?" I asked my father.

"We had to do it. Our neighbours were constantly grumbling that the tree branches were encroaching on their allotment and the leaves mucking their pavements. We had no other choice. But look!" he stretched out his arm and pointed at the two trees standing in the middle of the courtyard. "We relocated them to the centre so that we can keep them. This way it's not disturbing anyone."

Incredulous, I kept staring at the trees which were now mysteriously standing in the middle of the terrace.

"How will they survive without roots?"

"They'll grow new roots", he said nonchalantly.

Even though I didn't understand how it could be possible, his words appeased me. Nonetheless, I remained baffled. My father is not the type of person who holds any reservations when it comes to cutting down a tree which has dared to grow more than what was expected of it. Or otherwise, one which has failed to grow any fruit. How could it dare? It wasted precious space and time by simply being there and not paying its dues in the form of fruit supply. Not even a tithe!

An intrusive alarm blasted out and abruptly pulled me out from the scene. The phone alarm went off. It's 7:30 am. It was only a bizarre dream! Rootless trees? What does that even mean? Eyes shut, I unrelentingly battered the phone screen with my finger until I finally hit the snooze button. Another ten minutes and I'll get up from bed. After four consecutive days of drudgery work my body and mind felt drained. During the week, as I left before dawn and returned in the evening, the curtains in my room remained drawn throughout all this time. Today I'm off to visit a friend who lives by the side of the Peak District National Park. A vast territory - by UK standards - of grassy hills. It has been woodless for so many centuries that many people trekking there truly believe they're wandering in the wilderness.

After twenty minutes or so, I finally garnered the strength and will to eject myself from the bed. My first impulse was to open the curtains. Fresh morning light rushed in brightening the overcast room. It made me squint briefly. After two weeks of relentless rain plundering the North West of England, the clear sunny skies felt like a novelty. But there was something else which I couldn't figure out immediately. Something wasn't the same. The view out of the window was too clear and plain. There was something different in it. That's when I realised that the tree which always stood across my window pane was missing. This lofty tree was higher than the four-storey building I was living in. The complex web of branches and leaves of its lush canopy wasn't there anymore. I craned forward to look down at the communal garden below. Its vast oblong trunk, bereft of its branches which had been sheared off, lay on the ground next to its stump. Bindweed wrapped the trunk in a final hug. A heap of segmented branches stood on the side. Sheeted by a layer of sawdust, the grass round the tree had turned yellow. It was a bleak sight and intriguing as well, given that I had dreamed about tree felling just moments before. Anyway, dreams are plentiful. So it was perhaps just a sad coincidence. Further ahead, on the other end of the garden, I noticed that another tree had been chopped down. I was filled with a mixture of sadness, frustration and finally anger. How could they have done this?

I was amongst one of the many living species which relied on this tree. It provided me shade and cool in the short spells of muggy summer weeks. In the colder winter months, it prevented the house temperature from plummeting and shielded it from storms. Its branches and leaves swayed and spun to the rhythm of the wind on stormy days and nights. Buffeted by gales, they rustled and howled madly. It

was soothing to stare at the tree while lying down in bed or working on the desktop. It was a form of meditation.

Perched on those branches, magpies and carrion crows oftentimes socialised and grumbled with each other. Bands of marsh tits winged amok like riotous kids in a classroom rid of their teacher's vigilant eyes. Satiated wood pigeons snoozed on this tree with their beaks nested inside their puffy chests. They would rest on this tree after the venturesome task of plucking cherries from the tree beside. Upside down and dangling precariously on the brittle twigs, they adroitly spread and clutched their wings on other twigs for support and balance. Not giving a hoot to their human neighbours' public prudishness, feral pigeons kissed and mated unabashedly. Grey squirrels - disdainfully nicknamed tree rats - bounded along the branches and leapt fearlessly from canopy to canopy.

Staring out from the window sill, now a vast empty space lay ahead of me. Suddenly, without this tree, which provided me with hide and privacy in an urban conglomerate, I felt exposed. The car traffic thronging on the not so distant four-lane road wasn't obscured anymore by the dense mass of branches and foliage. Across this newly formed sterile expanse I could now clearly see the red brick building on the opposite side of the field. Beyond this building, gleaming high-rises boasting more than forty floors and a myriad of tower cranes towered above and leered down with their metallic gaze.

Hunched over with my elbows resting on the window sill, my mind wanders off while I look vacantly at this sombre scene. We live in a society which is both contentedly subordinated as well as staunchly devoted to the dominant belief of techno-industrial development. This same society, and the culture within, beguiles with a great degree of efficiency human beings into seeing themselves to be detached from and devoid of any meaningful connection with Nature. We truly believe the illusion that we are a separate entity from Nature. Instead, we find connection, comfort and hopefulness in an ever-growing technological leviathan which vehemently opposes Nature and delusively tinkers with the fantasy of subjugating it, making it just another commodity to capitalise on. The raw materials and energy that feed this insatiable apparatus are growing ever scarcer. But even if its signs of wear and crippling shortcomings are self-evident, it's hard as an individual to wrench oneself out of this self-destructive enterprise.

Like an exemplary city dweller, I never knew what species this tree was. Additionally, resembling a contemporary apartment dweller in an absurd Kafkaesque setting, I don't know any of my neighbours except for the rare glimpses by the window and ephemeral encounters by the staircase. Even though I moved here five years ago. I wonder what my neighbours' reaction was to this tree felling. My cynical half suspects some would claim that this tree was preventing the sunlight from reaching their homes and obstructing the marvellous building views of modern Manchester and Salford from their windows. The optimistic half senses some would feel the same suppressed anger and powerlessness as I did.

Despite that, whilst entrenched amidst a concrete, steel and glass-devoted urban conglomerate such as Salford-Manchester, I genuinely felt a strong emotional connection with the trees around the apartment block. In five years, I grew accustomed to sense the passage of time through the tree's life-cycle, such as when they defoliated, held-on harsh winters whilst leafless, bloomed flowers in spring and a host of insects suddenly emerged alongside, bore fruit, and when it started all over again.

Urban planners in these two cities are obsessed with minimalistic architecture. Concrete, steel and glass are some of the building materials of this architectural style, but this trend is also characterised by the implementation of clean lines, geometric shapes and the bare usage of ornamental traits. The outcome is a dense mass of high-rises which are as sundry as the monochromatic shipping containers atop a cargo ship. This urban neatness is starkly opposed to the richness in colour and form, unpredictability and exuberant chaotic nature of Nature itself. To mask this aversion to anything wild, in more exclusive building blocks, they wrap them with trees and plants. They simply pay lip service to real concerns about the incommensurable environmental degradation and loss of green spaces and wildlife. This sham is further bolstered by the heavy deployment of buzzwords such as sustainable housing, eco-friendly architecture and carbon-neutral yackety-yak spun by sophisticated PR campaigns, the mainstream media and across the political spectrum.

Hooked on real estate, particularly luxurious skyscrapers, asphalted roads and multi-storey car parks, there is no available space for trees and green spaces. Every leftover green lot is a lost investment opportunity. Potted young trees and mowed lawns are the only options which fit the urban aesthetic requirements. Trees that grow beyond their strictly attributed space and height are considered either a safety hazard or a public nuisance. Besides, birds mischievously use their branches as platforms from where

to pelt poop on city dwellers. Their viscous droppings also smear the freshly washed and waxed vehicles parked below and worse of it all, they ruin the car paintwork. It is unacceptable behaviour, we can infer. That being so, subject to human caprice, trees are closely surveilled and put down without much ceremony. As another tree is taken down, I'm certain that many bird families and other species which relied on it will eventually lose their lives. Right now, they're probably more bewildered than I am. Whilst I can head to the supermarket to get food, they've just lost another source of their dwindling food and shelter supplies.

When it comes to the risks and hazards of a purported tree falling danger, the bureaucratic concern about human safety could be moving if it wasn't for the fact the thousands of vehicles that speed on these busy roads kill and maim far more scores of human and non-human beings every single year. It may warp steel, smash glass and break bones, but car crashes make no dents in people's consciousnesses except for the victims and their close relatives and friends. Like the Mayans who blindly revered their gods, we share an absolute faith in the automobile industry and can't see beyond the road and motorised vehicle paradigm as a means of mobilisation and land configuration. We're willing to sacrifice endless lives which is an unfortunate, but ultimately, necessary collateral damage to achieve that end. These wheeled metallic deities elicit more awe and reverence than trees. Radically minimising car or motorbike traffic and providing other alternatives is far from the agenda. Motorised vehicles are so omnipresent in our lives that we are unable to imagine a life without them and fail to critically analyse their nefarious impact on ourselves and our surrounding biosphere. What matters most is that we reach point *A* to *B* regardless of whom or what stays in between. This does not only imply car accidents. A road has a devastating impact on the ecosystem and in further parcelling out the landscape into smaller disconnected areas.

Ironically, under incessant indoctrination from our industrial society, under its culture and values, we truly believe that roads are the gateway to freedom. "Pack your things up, get in the car and hit the road! An adventure awaits you". So the saying goes. Roads are the mere labyrinthine routes of our self-built cages. They provide us with a false sense of freedom insofar as the roads are the margins of civilisation, not the yonder. Where it reaches it encroaches, domesticates and obliterates what it encounters on its way.

Nearly every single month, in this region alone, I witness the disappearance of a tree. Although the reasons are multiple, they're nonetheless predictable. Either because new roads are built, existing ones are expanded, new houses, industrial sites and car parks are constructed, or properties are cleared up of their flora by their owner or tenant's will. Others justify the action by saying the tree was rotting and at the danger of falling at any time. This argument is used too many times to be always the case. Mostly, it is dishonestly employed to deflect any forthcoming contestation. Finally, some take them down solely for the thrill of it. This was the case when the esteemed Sycamore Gap Tree up in Northumberland was felled in 2023. This tree became internationally famous when it was featured in a 90's Robin Hood film.

As we disfigure our ecosystem and steadily pave the planet's surface with concrete and asphalt, the book *Columbus and Other Cannibals* by Jack D. Forbes with its poignant introspection of civilisation and its cannibalistic practices comes to mind. As the late descendants and present staunch defendants of civilised industrial society, we're filled with both horror and fascination when our minds conceive of the past cannibalistic customs and human sacrifices of certain tribes and civilisations. These were often practised as a ritual. To consume another human being was to acquire their strength and virtues. As gory as it may seem, contrary to Westerners' vast track record of wiping out whole communities and ecosystems, there was no intent on exterminating the other. A certain level of respect, which varied across different bands and societies, was held amongst other humans and the surrounding biosphere which they knew they were an intrinsic part of. This was also interspersed with recurrent spouts of peace and violence, reverence and hatred between different peoples. But even though they fiercely battled each other, the extermination of another race was rare.

Horrified by the accounts of cannibalism, the Europeans acted swiftly to abolish it and *civilise the savages*. While we violently exterminated other humans who did not share our *modus vivendi* and relentlessly tore down and commodified whole habitats, we failed to conceive that we are, in all its essence, the true cannibals on this planet.

Jack D. Forbes confined the definition of cannibalism to the consumption of other human beings in its literal and practical forms. One could add that blighting the planet Earth from which we are an in-

trinsic part, together with many other natural elements which constitute and inhabit it, is also a form of cannibalism.

We are slowly mutilating and cannibalising ourselves when we, for instance, kill the water life by pumping sewage and agricultural waste, choke it with plastic, and render it inanimate by overfishing. In England alone, all waterways are polluted. It is unthinkable to drink water from it save from the mountain water streams. Even there, one can only drink it after cautious consideration. A quarry or a slaughterhouse may be hidden from view. We are cannibalising ourselves when we wipe out whole forests and the meagre remainder of green spaces in our cities which provide us with oxygen and make the air breathable.

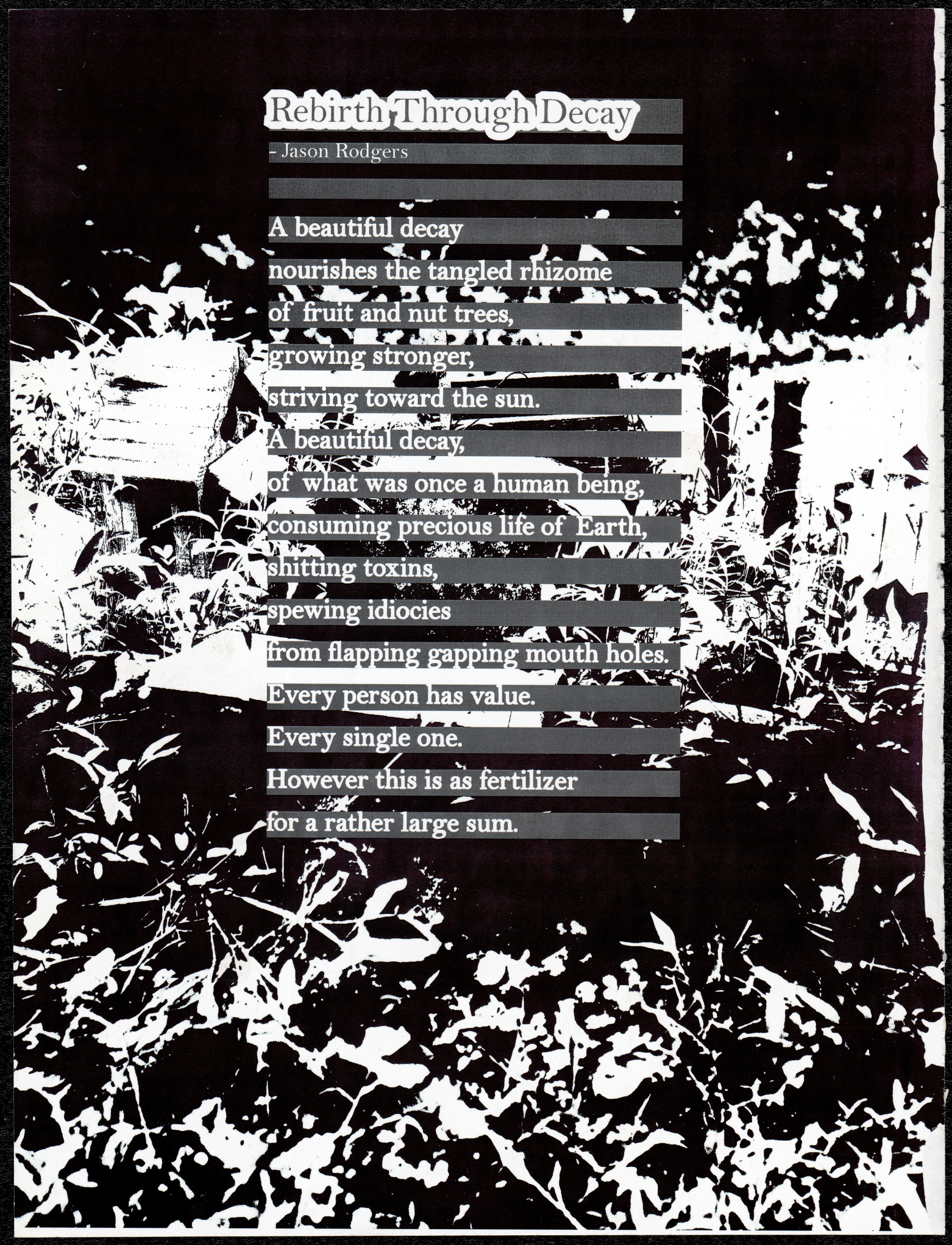
Everything we encounter, whether it is human or non-human, whether it is land, water or air, immediately loses its intrinsic value. Its only worth is valued in economic terms and how much we can extract from it. It is to be consumed till it's *finito*. What cannot adjust itself to our twisted way of living is cannibalised and regurgitated back into something which is tamed and formulated.

Civilised society, since it sprouted a few thousand years ago, unleashed a brutal conquest and subsequent extermination of numerous peoples, all other life and its land, from where it feeds and grows itself from. This continues to the present day becoming ever more devastating and widespread with its heavy reliance on technology which becomes more sophisticated by the day. Our ravenous cannibalistic appetite has now a planetary impact. We thoughtfully coined this time as Anthropocene. This is a more digestible word and a euphemism for cannibalism.

This tree is only the latest casualty of this ongoing horror story which sees no end. It's only a tree, who cares. Another tree can be planted in its place. Besides, as long as we all install wooden birdhouses and bug hotels in our treeless and bushless lawns, get electric cars and bicycles to move around, install solar panels, wrap the world surface with wind turbines, religiously recycle our litter, purchase clothes made from recycled plastic bottles and suck our canned drinks from paper straws we got a bright promising future ahead of us.

-J. Belard





Rebirth Through Decay

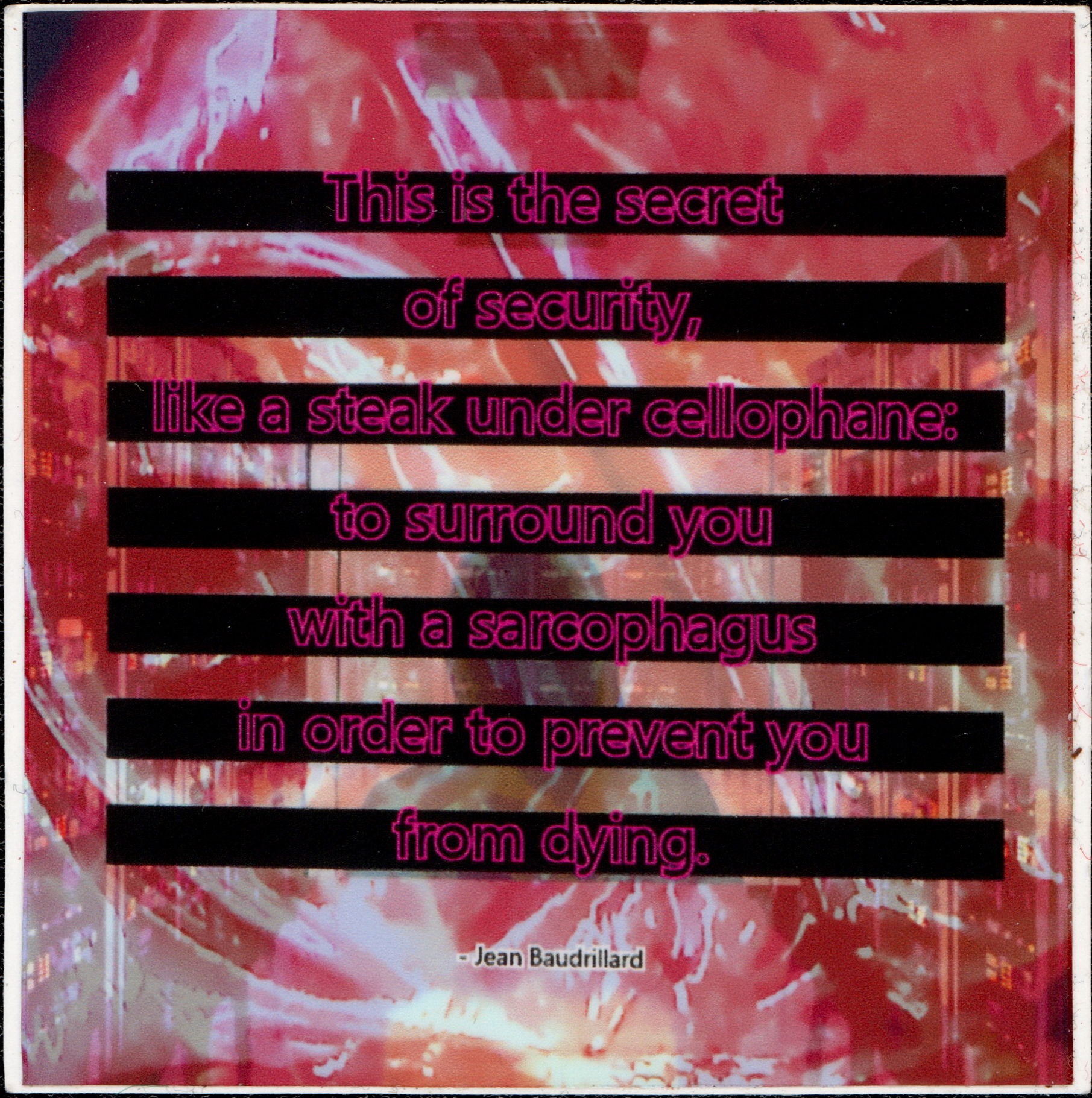
- Jason Rodgers

A beautiful decay
nourishes the tangled rhizome
of fruit and nut trees,
growing stronger,
striving toward the sun.
A beautiful decay,
of what was once a human being,
consuming precious life of Earth,
shitting toxins,
spewing idiocies
from flapping gapping mouth holes.
Every person has value.
Every single one.
However this is as fertilizer
for a rather large sum.


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This is the secret
of security,
like a steak under cellophane:
to surround you
with a sarcophagus
in order to prevent you
from dying.
- Jean Baudrillard