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Is the End of the World Upon Us?

There are plenty of signs that would lead us to believe that this is the case. In this issue we focus on natural catastrophies, both the incredibly dangerous ways they're minimized by government agencies and popular media, as well as our total lack of collective responsibility, demonstrated by our increasing consumption of finite resources. Our world has gone mad with profit-for-the-very-few and the political and social con- sequences of a world with as great a gap in income levels as there has ever been are dangerous. How will the next economic crash look compared to the 1930s? Will it take another war to end the next one? Can we survive such a war? Finally, is the end of the world visible in how we allow our- selves to be treated by the State? If Black Lives Matter has taught us anything it is that the human capacity to objectify and destroy other humans is as high today as it has ever been and that the rhetoric is even more sophisticated (and not) and even less forgiving. If the end of the world is a measurable event there is plenty of evidence that the meter for it is at a near high.

But if we were to predict what is going to happen we would not predict a technicolor, end-of-the-action-movie, discrete end of the world in our lifetime. What we would predict is instead something of a whimper. We would argue that the end of human progress looks like a thousand Space X capsules failing to make orbit, islands in South Asia disappearing, and the infamous air pollution in Bejing. The headlines will continue to scream about the end of the idea that humans are capable of thinking and acting in big and successful ways about our own possibilities. We will slowly starve.

The end of the world—just like ideas of human perfectibility or our progressive future of reasonable solutions to logistical problems—should be seen for what it is: a construction of the amazing myth machine of the particular society that we live in. Our four horsemen will not come with scythe, sword, arrow, and scale. They will just come with less: less resources, less political stability, and less capacity to see a way out. This is because ultimately what we call the end of the world will merely be the end of this particular humanist society, the end of a Western Civilization that spans the globe, the end of Global Capitalism™ as we know it. It may be the end of neo-Rome but it isn't the end of us.

The problem we face is: who are we without the world as we understand it? Are we preppers whose future vision is limited to fences and feeding our (homogenous) children? Are we parochial victims of future strongmen as prefigured in so many movies and books? Or are we something else?

If rewilding has been worth anything in green anarchist thought and practice it's been engaging as an intervention into this question. But along with gaining skills we also need to seriously reassess how we associate with one another. Perhaps it is too late for city dwellers, who appear to be no longer capable of caring for one another even in today's world. We have plenty of examples of what co-existence can look like, what forms cooperation and mutual aid have taken, but we experience its impossibility in our daily lives. Perhaps the lesson we should draw from the upcoming Great Whimper is that we have serious work to do regarding the depth and sincerity

of our interpersonal relationships. Other people may not save us but they do sometimes make surviving on less seem like thriving on more, a lesson that becomes more and more obviously necessary, as we have experienced excess and it has turned out to be less desirable than we could have imagined.

What's in this issue?

This issue of *Black Seed* meets the crisp air of Fall with open arms. Each Summer seems to drag on longer and longer and our hunger for the Winter becomes increasingly desperate, but enough about romance. There was a thought that the theme of this issue would be the end of the world. There has been enough evidence that it (The End of the World) is upon us, or at least there was three months ago, but today we have terror in our headlines and not the orange river in Colorado.

This issue (and the centerfold) has an interest in end of the world thinking (why it is and is not our thinking) but it also considers a few other things like animism and the anthropocene, liminal identities and the failure of the new Bookchinism, and the pleasure of text, trees, bears, and crows. So not the end of the world in fact, but maybe the endtime of this civilization. And instead of a concern with how to manage the transition to a new world (i.e. civilization) a concern with crows and other natural survivors of the annihilation-machines of this order.

This issue does seem to demonstrate that our capacity to publish this paper may be more ephemeral than we had originally anticipated but for now we still plan on publishing twice a year; it's just unclear whether it'll be a Spring/Fall schedule or a Summer/Winter schedule. We have decided to commit to subscriptions at $12/4 issues (or $6/year) and it'll include shipping and whatnot. Or you can become a special *Black Seed* LBC accomplice and get a book a month in addition to a bundle of each new *Black Seed*.

We continue to be excited about the potential for this project, the space for conversations that have never happened before (or at least not on as large a stage), specifically native and anarchist tendencies meeting and diverging, and the needed challenge to the self-satisfied and ideological green thinkers currently best known in the US. We look forward to your feedback and thoughts!

— The Editors

Anarchy on the Scorched Earth, by Balora

> *"Social disruption and economic consequences of such a large sea-level rise could be devastating. It is not difficult to imagine that conflicts arising from forced migrations and economic collapse might make the planet ungovernable, threatening the fabric of civilization."*
> — Eric Rignot
> Climate Scientist at NASA

> *"Its no longer us against 'Nature.' Instead, it's we who decide what nature is and what it will be."*
> — Paul Crutzen

There is a famous story that after the Trinity test in 1945, a quote from the *Bhagavad-Gita* came to Oppenheimer: "Now I am become DEATH, the destroyer of worlds." There is another translation of this line that some claim is more accurate: "I am become TIME, the destroyer of worlds." Of course, the discovery and use of the atom bomb was not the first time an event has pushed apocalyptical language into popular discourse, but the devastation wrought to Hiroshima and Nagasaki reignited the understandable belief that the end times were at hand. Eschatology has never simply been a fringe interest for theologists, it would be a mistake to marginalize what has also been a secular concern. In this society rationality is prized above all else, and holy people of past ages would now be diagnosed with any number of psychological disorders, but perhaps the secular and the religious views of humanity's role on this earth are not as distant from each other as they first might seem. Signs of the end times are no longer hidden knowledge. Anybody is a click away from seeing these portents. No one ideology or world view has ever owned end-times discourse. Paul Boyer in *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* observes that apocalyptic thought is "chameleon-like," used by both the subjugated and the powerful, secular and religious alike. Past the sensational headlines though, the stories are transformed into statistics and numbers that only the experts can decipher.

Never before have debates between scientists who study rock layers garnered so much attention, all due to a theory that we are living in a new epoch that stratigraphers are calling the Anthropocene. Coined by Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s and popularized by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen in a 2002 article *Geology of Mankind*, the Anthropocene (The Age of Man) differs from every other marked epoch in that humans themselves are the geologic force shaping the planet. In a relatively short amount of time, we have shaped the earth as much as supervolcano eruptions and meteors have in the past. This has been a controversial theory in scientific circles, but there is simply too much evidence to ignore the reality that *homo sapiens* have dramatically and permanently altered the earth. Geologists aren't the only ones interested in studying and debating the Anthropocene. It has now become part of the lexicon of many diverse areas of study.

Everything from economics to gender studies has been touched by this theory and it has been highly influential in a diverse variety of academic disciplines including human-animal studies, philosophy, and history.

Despite the sudden proliferation of the new term in respected academic journals, which has led some to call the theory a "fad, a farce, or a hoax," this is not at all a new idea. In 1873 Antonio Stoppani, an Italian Catholic priest and geologist, wrote "I do not hesitate in proclaiming the Anthropozoic era. The creation of man constitutes the introduction into nature of a new element with a strength by no means known to ancient worlds. And mind this, that I am talking about physical worlds . . . this creature, absolutely new in itself, is, to the physical world, a new element, a new telluric force that for its strength and universality does not pale in the face of the greatest forces of the globe." Stoppani's theory, ahead of its time, was considered unscientific, just as similar theories are derided today.

Descriptions of the human impact on earth are awe-inspiring: 'A single engineering project, the Syncrude mine in the Athabasca tar sands, involves moving 30 billion tonnes of earth—twice the amount of sediment that flows down all the rivers in the world in a year. That sediment flow itself, meanwhile, is shrinking; almost 50,000 large dams have over the past half- century cut the flow by nearly a fifth. That is one reason why the Earth's deltas, home to hundreds of millions of people, are eroding away faster than they can be replenished." Its not hard to imagine that this single example of human impact alone is causing irreversible changes that will prove to be detrimental to the continuation of civilization, creating a world that we cannot foresee. Unlike cataclysms of the Zoo wants to build a "frozen zoo" where genetic material taken from extinct animals is used to bring them back from the dead. The last of the White Rhinos, surrounded 24 hours a day by armed guards, will be witnessed through virtual reality. Perhaps one day after our own extinction cryogenically frozen *homo sapiens* will be revived and be the main attraction in a future zoo.

Most people, even the scientists who feel there is no doubt that humankind is looking down the barrel of a cannon, watching the fuse grow shorter, continue to be optimistic about their new world. Environmental journalist Christian Schwagerl believes children should learn about the Anthropocene for practical reasons: "Students in school are still taught that we are living in the Holocene, an era that began roughly 12,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age. But teaching students that we are living in the Anthropocene, the Age of Men, could be of great help. Rather than representing yet another sign of human hubris, this name change would stress the enormity of humanity's responsibility as stewards of the past, there will not be a single "collapse" or catastrophe, and in a way this leads people into a false sense of security, that the banal statistics will be the key to humanity's salvation. We are no longer waiting for Christ, we are waiting for the experts to save us. As long as there are still people with air conditioning, and all the other luxuries civilization affords them, there will always be more time to make their society "sustainable." Meanwhile heatwaves are getting hotter and more frequent and islands are being slowly swallowed by oceans.

Due to what Crutzen and other environmental scientists have termed the "Great Acceleration," a second stage of the Anthropocene that begins after 1945, we are also currently living in the sixth extinction. Much of the debate about the Anthropocene in environmental circles involves conservation. People want to conserve, they want to keep nature around for their own entertainment, or to keep exploiting its resources. They can't stand to think of a world without the polar bear or the orangutan. Yet, even more they cannot stand more the thought of existing in an uncivilized

state. They want to watch the Gorilla, not be the Gorilla. San Diego Earth. It would highlight the immense power of our intellect and our creativity, and the opportunities they offer for shaping the future." This is secular society's reworking of the Christian ideal of dominion.

> "*This is a solvable problem—if we start now.*"
> — *President Obama*

> "*Time doesn't mean anything when you're about to have water lapping at your door.*"
> — *Peter Dutton*
> *Australian Immigration Minister*

In anticipation of the UN Climate Change Conference hosted in Paris this November, on August 31st, Obama began a tour of Alaska to ostensibly bring attention to the dramatic environmental changes happening in the Arctic state. In reality, it was a promotion for the tourism industry. As the glaciers recede, so will the cruise ships full of tourists paying good money to line up on deck to get an instagram-worthy shot of the magnificent icebergs. Before leaving for his vacation (which included personal survival lessons from none other than Bear Grylls—no word yet on whether he had to drink his own piss), Obama made sure to sign over the final permits Shell needed for oil exploration in the Arctic. Like so many others, Obama continues to act as though the economy can continue to grow even as climate change is mitigated. Rather than seeing the glaciers melting as a sign marking the end, entrepreneurs and businesses around the world see unprecedented opportunities for expanding their bank accounts. Even before the President finished his tour of the imperiled state, he proposed the building of more Coast Guard icebreakers. "The retreat of Arctic sea ice has created opportunities for shipping, tourism, mineral exploration, and fishing. . . . The growth of human activity in the Arctic region will require highly-engaged stewardship to maintain the open seas necessary for global commerce and scientific research, allow for search-and-rescue activities, and provide for regional peace and stability."

As it stands, there are many problems with the Anthropocene discourse, but there is still something there that is well worth anarchists' time. Those on the official Left are already engaged with the topic and creating their own narrative that merely continues the same line of thinking that got us to where we are now. Some believe the Anthropocene is a myth, and that it is not humanity that is impacting the earth, the only culprit is capitalism. "Socialists cannot ignore a change of this magnitude, or treat it as just one aspect of our program The fight to avoid a catastrophic outcome to this crisis engendered by capitalism is the fight to safeguard the material conditions for survival with dignity of humankind. . . . Socialism is not possible on a scorched earth." Unlike socialism, anarchy is possible on a scorched earth. Anarchy doesn't rely on exploited resources or the I management and control of society. If we can cultivate imaginations that extend beyond rewilding and social and climate justice, anarchy can and will survive the worst calamities. As the author Roy Scranton points out in *Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene*, "The biggest problem we face is a philosophical one: understanding that this civilization is already dead. The sooner we confront this problem, and the sooner we realize there's nothing we can do to save ourselves, the sooner we can get down to the hard work of adapting, with mortal humility, to our new reality. . . .

The choice is a clear one. We can continue acting as if tomorrow will be just like yesterday, growing less and less prepared for each new disaster as it comes, and more and more desperately

invested in a life we can't sustain. Or we can learn to see each day as the death of what came before, freeing ourselves to deal with whatever problems the present offers without attachment or fear." The anthropocene opens up fertile ground for discussions that should be of interest to anarchists and wild rebels everywhere. Like the opening of seeds after a wildfire, this space of death can breathe new life into the stagnant approaches to anarchism, still bogged down in political struggles. This is no time for safe spaces and trigger warnings, the Anthropocene is unforgiving and hostile, but this is exactly where anarchy can be dangerous and thrive. Let us not forget that the universe was created by chaos! Instead of positioning anarchism as the world's savior, as technology and geoengineering are viewed by the experts, let us position anarchy as the end. If we are to burn in the fires, let us stoke the flames. *"We are become ANARCHISTS, the destroyers of worlds!"*.

The Issues are not the Issue: A Letter to Earth First! from a Too-Distant Friend

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In July of 2013, the national Earth First! rendezvous took place in North Carolina. At the gathering, a former Earth First! Participant circulated the following essay which critiques the Earth First! movement from an insurrectionary anarchist perspective. At the rendezvous, the text prompted many debates about what strategies make sense in a new era of global resistance. We reproduce this essay, followed by a debate between the author and a member of EF! in hopes that it continues to inspire discussion and critical reflection on our activity.*

Once upon a time, I found myself before dawn hiding in the kudzu and ivy that grew just below the treeline of a mountain gravel road. Time had slowed down, as it often does in those situations, but eventually the moment came when a dozen others, armed with locks, a soon-to-be-disabled car, and a tripod, materialized out of the darkness to block the mine's entrance. Looking back up the steep incline to see the barricade lit red by flares, rendering the further destruction of that beautiful place impossible for at least a few hours, remains one of my fondest memories.

Eight years have passed since that small experience. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge. I continue to be involved in struggle, though more out of a desire for survival, conflict, vengeance, and affinity than a hope for social change. Nevertheless the return of the Earth First! Rondy to my home state seemed an appropriate time to renew certain critical questions, questions that have been raised before by better writers than I but were seemingly set aside under the constant pressure to address the newest threat that would destroy The World. Though certainly a critique, I hope that this can be seen as a gesture of affinity and communication to people who also want to live wild and free.

An Image From the Past

The larger world of radical politics during my EF! years was suffocated by the anti-war movement, which was dominated by the Left and various socialist sects. These folks were lost in the anti-capitalist riots of the anti-globe era but at home in the lukewarm waters of "anti-imperialism." Anarchists, for the most part, felt awkward and at odds with this period, especially those of us like myself who sharpened our political teeth in the street conflicts at the turn of the century. The anti-war days molded our thinking and our practices nonetheless. We became sequestered in "community building" and single-issue politics which could never fully reflect our ideas or desires. Earth First! made sense in some ways, as the best possible version of that model, so many of us got involved with eco-defense in this period.

The prevailing winds changed, however: riots broke out in the slums of Europe, Greece was set ablaze when Alexis was murdered, the black bloc re-awoke at the '08 conventions, university occupations in '09 refused to make any demands of Power, widespread and generalized antagonism to police broke out in the Northwest a year later, Oakland got revenge for Oscar Grant and

a couple years later went on general strike. Many of us felt like we had come home again. Others remained in the activist house they had built for themselves, limited but comfortable. Seeking different experiences, we began to speak different languages that reflected not only conflicting analyses but, maybe even more divisive, different desires. This was not fundamentally a conflict over specific activities or post-rev visions (i.e. infrastructure vs. attack or green vs. red), but over how the matrix of capitalism, politics, activism, and "issues," functioned, and thus over what it meant to try to intervene. Increasingly it has become difficult even to talk to each other, our words and deeds passing unheeded like ships in the night.

A Glimpse of the Future

If it was not already, it became clear to many of us that single-issue politics and its activist campaigns were a dead-end. This understanding was rooted in the desires of admittedly impatient and unruly participants, as it should be, but also in a hardnosed analysis of late 21st century industrial capitalism, a system that is always able to evolve one step ahead of even the most radical demands, more than willing to replace fracking with tar sands, tar sands with coal, coal with wind, wind with solar, solar with hydro, hydro with nuclear, forever leaping from one issue to the next in perpetual self-preservation.

In reflection, I realized that what was meaningful about these EF! campaigns to me was not the ever-elusive possibility of reform or change but those rare accidental moments of rupture, the time when the lockdown unintentionally became a trampling mob destroying the office lobby, or when the Appalachian campaign spilled over into locals taking potshots at bulldozers with their .308s. This was not mere adventurism, but a real desire to break out of the stranglehold of politics.

I gave up on the idea of gradually increasing our power with small victories, for this approach had little to no basis in reality. Insurrections do not erupt on the surface of history via gradualist-oriented issue-activism. Put another way, Turkey is not currently exploding to save a tree-lined park; those trees are a coincidence that provides shade to the multitudes who rebel for a thousand different reasons against every aspect of capitalist life. Thousands of people do not riot to save a few trees or, for that matter, the life of one murdered youth. In this sense the struggle in Turkey is politically legible neither to Power nor to the social movements that would manage it, including the country's radical environmentalists. This is an advantage.

The camps of Occupy, the Arab Spring, the austerity riots across Europe, the demand-less explosions which occur every time the police murder youth, the flash mobs that steal en masse, even just the general breakdown of civil society, all make it more clear where industrial society and our resistance are heading. Months after a black bloc awakens at the heart of a second Egyptian revolution, Turkey explodes, and weeks later Brazil's cities are set ablaze by its poorest inhabitants, explained away by the media as a response to "corruption." The time between these moments is decreasing, the ruptures themselves increasingly violent and generalized. We are entering a period where the state of exception is increasingly permanent and deterritorialized. This is our future. In this context, to speak of drawn out, gradually escalated strategic campaigns against specific ecological practices makes no sense.

After witnessing and participating in these events, many of us have tried to find a different path, keeping our love and fondness for the land while seeking new ways to develop into a social

force that can contribute to a more total break with the society we live in. Like any experiment, this has been wrought with failures and mistakes. But we have also undoubtedly interrupted and intervened successfully in many of the aforementioned rebellions. Much of what was once specific to the trajectory discussed here has become general features of rebellion around the world: a refusal to make demands, the creation of autonomous communal spaces, a hatred of the police, a critique of the media, a critique of the Left, a critique of direct democracy, a sharpened understanding of recuperation, an emphasis on attack. To be sure, this generalization is not something any single "we" can take credit for. These positions are as much descriptive as prescriptive, less the product of a certain milieu advocating certain strategies and more a reflection of modern life and social conditions. But this is our world, the one that creates us. Our revolt flows inside it, and must evolve alongside it.

Many of these positions incubated awkwardly during the mid-2000s, but are now reflected (albeit very unevenly) by everyone from Raging Grannies to homeless youth to New York Times editorialists. That such premises have found expression around the globe in so many circles, and yet stay more or less aloof from the Earth First! activist subculture, remains a mystery to me. When so much has changed, not just within the boardrooms of our enemies but in the kinds of revolt present among our friends, how can a network of creative and brilliant people still be doing activism and issue politics in the same old ways? When a formerly middle-class Obama voter can be heard articulating a critique of the demand-form at an illegal public encampment, how and why does such a critique elude the militants of Earth First? Do Earth Firsters still believe they can save the World one forest, one species, one dirty energy method at a time? Is the change they wish to see merely the summary of every individual campaign issue?

Nothing Doing and Doing Nothing

Driven by an almost theological morality, many will respond with the age-old strawman that to not do activism means to do nothing, that to not try to stop fracking or save the wolves means letting the world burn. Such a statement may have held sway in earlier, quieter times, but the events of the past few years have exposed this to be a false dichotomy. I am not contesting involvement or even engagement with issues per se, but rather the manner in which it occurs and the intention behind the activity itself. Put another way, I would argue that what is exciting about the ZAD struggle in France is not stopping the airport, which will likely just be built elsewhere in France if the occupiers "succeed," but the actual rupture, the mass revolt itself, represented both by the conflicts with police as well as the network of communal relationships established via the illegal occupation. The activist would see the ZAD as a tactic to protect a piece of land; I am arguing that it should be seen instead as an end in itself, and perhaps a path to greater insurrectionary possibilities in the future.

One might suggest that this is all mere semantics, that it doesn't matter why someone is excited about doing direct action as long as they're doing it. This is wrong; that which we find meaningful and useful about an experience affects the kind of experiences we will choose to create in the future. It drives the trajectory of our struggle. If petition drives and scary home demos seem more "realistic" ways of accomplishing a specific political goal, and that single issue is your priority, then you're less likely to make strategic choices which later put you shoulder to shoulder with a thousand comrades fighting cops among the trees. If a moment of revolt happens in this activist

context, as does sometimes occur, it is more as a coincidence than anything else, one which the participants will be ill-prepared to spread and deepen.

Both literally and figuratively, the activist is often at the back of the surging crowd in such situations, dragging their feet and desperately trying to hold back a struggle that threatens to break the barriers of their carefully chosen issue-narrative. Many Earth Firsters will personally object to such a characterization, but it is a framework of doing politics I'm discussing, not the authenticity of its individual participants. How that framework contributes (intentionally or not) to techniques of government by sequestering revolt to "issues" is what concerns me. A more militant or DIY version of the same framework is not adequate.

Political Identity vs. Affinity

The intention behind our activity also affects with whom we form relationships. Earth First! is traditionally an ally of mainstream enviro groups in many campaigns; as the "extremists" they offer a convenient whipping boy for the Big Greens, but benefit from the institutional connections and power-broking that helps accomplish their issue-goals, all while maintaining a radical image. The historical analogy of MLK and Malcolm X is often made here, but misses the point that both these men were statists who were highly legible to Power, and were more or less politicians in their own way. When they ceased to be so, their relationship both to Power and each other changed dramatically.

Historically Earth First! itself has contributed to a critique of the Green Left, but it nonetheless continues to operate in the same framework. EF!ers are radical environmentalists, no doubt, but they are still environmentalists, still doing the same politics as Sierra Club and Greenpeace but in a more militant way. Is it any surprise that so many older EF!ers get day-jobs with Rainforest Action Network, Sierra Club, Greenpeace, etc.? A friendly relationship with the institutional Left makes sense given the group's issue-focus. This is not an accusation of selling out—a meaningless epithet in any case—but it is worth thinking about how the political method we choose affects the relationships we prioritize.

If, on the other hand, one's priority is to perpetuate a general culture (and develop new practices) of revolt, it makes more sense to be antagonistic to the Left but tight with one's neighbors or co-workers or "non-political" friends, whomever one judges might go crazy with you when the shit hits the fan. Affinity rather than political identity becomes the center of gravity of the relationship. What someone "thinks about the environment" is meaningless to me. Do they hate the police? Do they hate work? Do they hate having mercury stored up in their gut? Do they hate some aspect of capitalist life? Do they want to knee-cap nuclear execs? Do we do similar kinds of crime to get by? Could I be friends with them, and do we have meaningful skills or ideas to share with each other or teach other? These questions are more interesting.

The Issues are not the Issue

I realize none of this is particularly new. Around 15 years ago now participants in UK anti-road struggles raised many of the same points, and in 2007 an editor for the EF! Journal proclaimed "Earth First! Means Social War" loud and clear, attempting to shift the direction of a waning movement, writing that, "Political identity and its limited effects have reached their expiration

date. What little autonomy we carved out by producing EF! as an activist approach is being taken from us. Whether we call it 'climate justice' or whether we relate our notion of we to a philosophy of biocentricism, we are still failing to draw lines that are based in reality."

That expiration date is now long past. The priorities and restructuring of Capital in the 21st century, along with our own experiences of revolt of the last few years, have confirmed this fact irrevocably. The enemy we face is adaptable, flexible, horizontal, a better democrat and better environmentalist than any Earth Firster could ever hope to be. Likewise, the experience of comrades from Athens to Cairo has proven that it is easier to topple governments than to reform them. This can only be more true when an "issue" strikes at the core of industrial society. The methodology of campaign activism that Earth First! has inherited from forest defense and the animal rights movement is hopelessly out of touch with this reality. Left to itself, would Earth First! as it currently stands have conducted Occupy as a campaign against corporate tax policies? Would it see the insurrection in Istanbul as a campaign to save a few urban trees? Would it reduce the 2008 riots in Greece to a way to achieve "criminal justice" for Alexis' murderers? I am left wondering.

Ultimately, Earth First!, a non-organization full of non-members, is besides the point. People will continue to intervene in ecological crises and struggles, as there are certain to be more of them, and the name with which they do so is irrelevant. But it is time to engage in a new way, with the conscious intention of breaking out of the barriers set by activism and issues. Political success is a quantitative thing that can be known through policy changes, polls, and statistics. It offers a degree of comfort in its legibility and pragmatism, and makes its participants feel reasonable. This continues to be the seductive logic of activism, militant or not. But this cannot be our logic.

The point is not to stop the Keystone Pipeline, for example, but to expand that struggle so that it becomes unrecognizable to its former self, so that it is no longer an "anti-pipeline movement" but multitudes of different kinds of people revolting against intersecting aspects of capitalist life. Because a pipeline will eventually be built anyway, even if the route changes a hundred times, because there will be fracking, even it's moved to another bioregion due to stronger resistance here, the center of gravity of our intervention must be fomenting general revolt, not "winning issues." A critique of green capitalism does not alone accomplish this task, if our method remains enmeshed in issue politics. Building a dam to hold back individual flows of Capital is not a viable option anymore, if it ever was.

As a proposal this probably sounds ridiculous to at least a few readers, but it's not so impossible as it sounds. Every neighborhood reaction to a police murder, every illegal encampment, every food riot, every prison fire, every land takeover of the last few years has taught us that any moment of disobedience has the potential to transform into a general ungovernability. We can contribute meaningfully to this potential in myriad ways, from helping a kid tie his shirt into a mask or calling out would-be politicians to building clever barricades or facilitating neighborhood assemblies. The skills we've learned as Earth Firsters are still useful, but the orientation has changed.

So I'm suggesting it's time to take a deep breath and reorient ourselves. The monster of civilization will not be brought down by gradualist activist campaigns, small nighttime bands of eco-issue warriors, or some combination of the two. Nor will industrial capitalism simply collapse of its own weight, at least not into anything other than a nightmarish fascism. Accepting these realities does not mean abandoning struggle, but changing how and why we intervene. I

still look back fondly on the days when I considered myself an Earth Firster, but as I read the reports from around the world, and think about my own experiences in the US, I must admit it feels like a very, very long time ago.

In love and struggle, for good BBQ and insurrection!

— S. T.

Against the Green Left: A Debate About Activism and Identity

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The text that follows, borrowed from the Crimethinc podcast* The Ex-Worker #10, *contains excerpts of a debate between Neal, who originally circulated the* "Issues Are Not the Issues" *text, and Panagioti, a member of the Earth First! Journal Collective. In italics is commentary and a final discussion between the two hosts of the podcast, Alanis and Clara, as they draw out conclusions from the debate and ask more questions. The full transcript can be found at:* `http://crimethinc.com/podcast/10/`

NEAL: My name's Neal. I've been involved in anarchist stuff for a long while. I was involved in Earth First!, especially around mountaintop removal and the struggle around that for a couple of years when I was living in a different town. And since then, moving here I got involved in different projects and followed the currents that seemed to make sense to engage in at the time. Really I started out with a couple of nights before the rendezvous, having the desire to reflect on why I was going. So I was actually trying to suss out personally why I was there and try and think, well, what has happened in the last seven or eight years since being involved in Earth First! stuff that has pulled me away? Because it seems like that's a valuable thing to think about, both for people who are in social movements and people who are no longer part of it, to try and think about what brings people in and what pushes them away. And so I was trying to reflect on that and it became something more like a critique of a certain model, or way of doing activism, is sort of what came out of it. Mainly coming from observations about where conflict or struggle has been sort of trending, I guess you could say, in the last few years, especially since 2008 but maybe even before then.

PANAGIOTI: I'm Panagioti, and as folks said, I work on the Earth First! Journal collective. Specifically relating to this text; after reading it and seeing it circulate at the rendezvous in North Carolina this summer, my feelings were pretty strong and then escalated as I thought more about it. The danger of it – and not danger in that cool, exciting, "let's be dangerous" kind of way, but in the way that's counterproductive to growing a movement, and some concerns that I have in relation to this and to the history I think it stems from and the potential future of where it could go are what I hope to present tonight; in particular that I think it's misdirected in critiquing Earth First!. Although there's a lot of valuable perspectives and opinions in it, I think that there's got to be a better way to present the concepts here without degrading a movement that has a lot to offer and has a history that's minimized or sort of ignored by the text.

The debate began with a question about how to respond to the flexibility of capitalism today, with which our enemies often co-opt or outmaneuver our resistance (for instance by building nuclear power plants when coal mining is politically difficult, or vice versa). What can we actually hope to gain by fighting particular instances of ecological destruction?

NEAL: First and foremost, I think that fighting specific instances of ecological devastation offers an opportunity that's not fundamentally different than any other time that we intervene in

some specific manifestation of the systems we hate as anarchists. The center of gravity when we intervene in some kind of instance of either ecological destruction or exploitation or oppression is not to engage in the way that we've been taught that politics typically work, in terms of policy analysts or a quantitative approach, but the question of: how do we come out of this with stronger and deeper affinities with new people? How do we come out of this as more powerful? How do we come out of this with greater material access to resources than we had before? How do we come out of this engagement with new tactics that we hadn't thought of before?

We've been taught that if we stop mountaintop removal on this site, that's a victory. And that drives us forward; it gives us a sense of urgency, and that can propel us to do positive and even courageous things. But it's also important to be able to step back and say, "Wait a second, they just mined the other mountain instead." It does push us to reevaluate how we judge success. I think what I'm proposing in a sense is that we try to start evaluating success when we intervene in a social struggle in a different way: less quantitatively, oriented towards how many petition signatures did you get, how many votes did you get, did you ban this thing or that other thing, are the cages two feet by one foot wider now, et cetera; and more in the direction of a qualitative sense of, did we come out of that more powerful than we went into it?

I think this becomes even more urgent on the ecological front when we look at the ways that ecological devastation is trending now, which is less and less towards things like, we're trying to save this specific acre of forest, or we're trying to free these 100 mink, and more and more towards giant totalizing things like climate change, peak oil, massive droughts and water shortages, disasters like Sandy and Katrina. Those kinds of instances of ecological devastation really aren't instances at all, they're hugely difficult to grasp patterns that the traditional methodology that we've inherited from animal rights and forest defense work that Earth First! still largely operates on and has inherited doesn't deal with well. A forest defense campaign, thinking about a problem in the way that a forest defense campaign or a nonviolent civil disobedience campaigns orient you, doesn't approach Hurricane Sandy very well. It doesn't approach climate change very well, because there's not a single target, or a set of single targets. There's just one massive social system. And so that forces us to reevaluate not only the way we do campaigns, but also how we evaluate success. We're less oriented toward specific victories in the short term and more oriented towards opening up spaces of general revolt, because that's really all that's left to us.

PANAGIOTI: I do think that there are some things here. I want to elaborate on why I initially said that it was misdirected and dangerous (not in a good way). And that's because I think that the view is a little bit, it's too abstract, which I think has been admitted. And also, for sounding larger and broader, to me it actually reflects a less long-term perspective or view on our participation in social struggles. And I say that because I've been organizing under an anarchist model and essentially, under different banners or slogans or whatever, but for the past 15 or 16 years, and it's been enough time to actually see actual successes and victories on the smaller scale that have rippling effects and help evolve a sense of strategy. For example, you know, the growth of an anti-coal movement being popularized and mainstreamed in my opinion, as opposed to promoting nuclear energy, that gave an opportunity for organizing against green technology and green capitalism, because the back end of things were covered. As far as the trajectory of capitalism is concerned, the old methods were already under attack by a broader mainstream presence, leaving space for us to start attacking the other end: biotechnology, solar and wind at the industrial scale, all these things… fracking and other forms of extraction that are relatively

new and under scrutiny that I think strategically it would be more important for us to look at how we tackle those things. You know, maybe setting aside some of the puritanical aspects of anarchist theory and ideology, and instead embracing some of the broader and practical elements of, you know, breaking up power in a practical and real way. Like, if energy companies are the most powerful companies on the planet, really powerful sources of force on this planet, more so than governments or other areas of social struggle, then it makes sense to attack them and fight them and use the tools that are available and real for us—which at this point in this country primarily is affinity-group-based direct action, along with smaller cells of underground sabotage. And I know maybe that's kind of a cliche formula, and the text we're talking about references that a little bit. But it's the tools that are present here. And I don't think that limits us from participating in movements that spring up like Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring and that current era of movement that's happening around the world. I think, on the contrary, that gives us experience, it gives us an opportunity to deepen trust and courage and skill and relationships in a way that allows struggle to be more valuable, more threatening to our opponents. The examples I want to reference are: the nuclear renaissance that was being heralded five years ago as a response to the coal backlash is now also crumbling, in part because of public pressure and in part because the whole economy is crumbling. I think it's worth giving ourselves some credit where it's due, and not just in that realm of energy, anti-energy extraction work, but also local campaigns. Like where I live, animal rights folks have been fighting this vivisection laboratory called Primate Products using the SHAC sort of model which I think a lot of people have said "Oh, it's passe," or "There's federal legislation, it's too dangerous, we can't do it." And they just shut down the primary facility they've been fighting, even though everyone's been saying that that's an old model, and they're scared to use it. So I think there's something to that. It's energizing and motivating and inspiring to move forward when we actually succeed in the things that we're doing.

NEAL: The first and foremost lesson or thing that I've seen from maybe looking at the last few years in the, on an international scale but also on a national scale in terms of what's happening with social struggle, rebellion of an ecological, social, class, race, whatever nature is that it's becoming increasingly clear that a gradualist mode of attacking issues or problems no longer seems even remotely relevant to me. That's sort of a shift… the traditional way we think about those things, or we're taught to is that as the active radical minority, you sort of engage with issues that lots of people are concerned about, and you push it and people kind of agree with you and you can get more radical and you gradually have more people and then eventually you have a whole lot of people, and then you storm the Bastille. But that's not really how things have been playing out. I don't know if people have noticed, but out of nowhere, Turkey explodes. Out of nowhere, Brazil explodes. You know, Occupy feels like it comes out of nowhere. And of course we know from being closer to those things that there's actually all sorts of relationships—organizational, individual, personal, political—that result in those kinds of sparks suddenly catching fire. And some of that is exactly the kind of stuff that Earth First! would be doing or that any of the rest of us would be doing. But the lesson that I learned from is that things tend to go from zero to sixty really, really, really, really fast. And what tends to get left behind in those moments is the narrowed, the unnecessarily narrow range of how we think about how we intervene as activists. All of a sudden, the "Well we sometimes do sabotage, and we do aboveground nonviolent direct action becomes irrelevant overnight, in terms of the tactical and social options available to us.

So what I'm proposing is not, like, let's not do those things. But let's recognize the field of possible opportunity about how to possibly engage is drastically broader than that, and that those kinds of things aren't going to get us where we want to go. If you acknowledge that, you go further.

The discussion went on to examine the relationship between ecological struggles and broader social upheavals, including the distinctive contributions made by Earth First! perspectives and tactics.

NEAL: Understanding the limitations of capitalism from an ecological point of view is one example of how eco-defense can contribute to broader social upheaval. Another example: presenting a sharp and pointed critique of the green left. I think Earth First! does a really good job, and just generally green anarchism over the last 12 years, 15 years, has done a good job of criticizing green technology, especially in the last five years, as that's become more—you know, the green light bulb thing is everywhere, etcetera, etcetera. But the green left, in terms of these organizations, has become more of a sticking point in my conversations with folks, because on the one hand there's this anarchist critique of recuperation. There should be an anarchist critique of recuperation. More specifically, how does an environmentalist group that pressures the government to ban a specific form of dirty energy actually function to help extend capitalism's life span? Does that make sense?

That critique of the green left can be done by people who are outside of green anarchist circles, but it's done better by people in green anarchist circles, because they have an understanding, a historical relationship with some of those organizations. That gets again into the question of, who do we have relationships with as anarchists who care about the earth, right?

Third thing I'd say, sharing skills and popularizing forms of struggle that encourage a relationship to the land is something that specifically ecological revolutionaries can contribute that's uniquely their own. And also, it's not just about relationships with other anarchists or other people who want to struggle, but specifically with the land. And there are all kinds of really awesome land occupations that I think have broken through the limitations of activism, and in the process really encouraged a relationship with the land. ZAD is a really good example, and some of the free states in North America are good examples.

Fourth, I would say the various tactical skills and concepts that the eco-defense folks, ecological revolutionaries have, are particularly useful not just for the more narrow kinds of campaigns that are currently going on, but actually for all kinds of struggles that we haven't even thought of yet. Like, all the different reasons and ways you could build a blockade apply to a million other scenarios that have an ecological bent, but maybe don't fall within what we think of as eco-defense.

PANAGIOTI: I feel fortunate to have been present at the tail end of the previous climax when Earth First! organizing essentially facilitated some of the WTO protests in Seattle by using blockages in the street to escalate a general protest into a more rebellion-style demonstration. I organize with the Everglades Earth First! group in Florida, and in general I'm in touch with a lot of the Earth First! organizing on the east coast, but I know this happened on the west coast as well, where Earth First! groups were offering a lot of the trainings and organizing the direct action component. Our Earth First! group started the direct action working group at the Occupy Palm Beach group where I live at, and did really interesting shit. I mean, nothing that's like, would get anywhere close to the word "insurrection" or "rebellion," but for the context were pushing the envelope. And I would like to see more of that happening. And if there's a different avenue or

vehicle to do it, then great. But I think that Earth First! has a lot of tools and resources to move forward with that.

They reflected on social and environmental struggles in Greece, which is known internationally as a hub for insurrectionary upheavals rather than campaign-based struggles.

PANAGIOTI: The current realm that a lot of Greek anarchists are organizing in is this anti-gold mining campaign model that's like—maybe it's kind of ironic, but it's one of the most exciting and interesting things happening in Greece, in part in light of the fact that some of the primary squats were evicted that were home bases of insurrection in Greece over the past couple of years. And just in general I think after like three years of straight rebellion with little to show for it, other than the intervention that's obviously really inspiring, and great photographs with the dog in front of the burning cops and stuff. I mean: people are like, "Fuck, man!" kind of bummed out. You know? And I think that the anti-gold mining campaign is this weird refreshing thing that's happening there. Maybe because in the past, that style of campaign organizing hadn't quite happened as much or hadn't—although they'd been fighting gold mining for years, I think that I saw a different and new energy happening there that I thought was in some ways a lesson or worth thinking about.

NEAL: When I think about Greece I don't get that excited about a gold mining campaign. In the last few years what's exciting about anarchists in Greece is that they've built up a social force that's maybe the only social force in Greece strong enough to overthrow the state—which is what we wanna do as anarchists, right? And would make the issue of a gold company somewhat moot. That being said…

Incidentally, if you're looking for examples of how to break out of the mold, or never enter into ecological struggle in the mold of activism and still want to look at ecological struggles in Greece, I suggest looking at the neighborhoods that destroyed all of the highways going into their city so that they couldn't build a landfill. It's really crazy and interesting. It would probably be more difficult here, but it's an interesting alternative.

PANAGIOTI: The anti-landfill campaign, you mean?

NEAL: Yes, it was a campaign. But…

PANAGIOTI: But it was insurrectionary too, and I think that's what we're getting at.

NEAL: Exactly. That's what we're getting at.

They went on to discuss the distinction between political identity versus affinity as the basis for our shared struggle, while criticizing institutional green leftist groups. The conversation concluded with further reflections on the limitations of the campaign model and the importance of a long view for understanding the value of our interventions over time.

NEAL: What I would propose, if it seems like a functional model, is shifting from what I would call a politics of identity or political identity to a politics of affinity. The questions change, right? So the question of, are they an environmentalist? What do they think about fracking or what do they think about the gold mine or what do they think about this, that, or the other starts to shift into something more like, do they wanna see the same things I wanna see? Do they have some of the same desires I have? Am I able to be friends with them? I don't give a shit whether someone calls themself an environmentalist. I don't care what bumper stickers are on their car, I don't care how they vote, I don't care even if they call themselves an anarchist. Don't care. What I care about is when I'm in a situation that calls for—and I want to intervene in a certain way, do they want to do the same things? Do we have something, some kind of basis for affinity? And

that can come from a lot of unpredictable places that are totally outside the world of politics as we tend to have taught ourselves to think about it.

So that sort of gets at the difference between the campaign model and the model of neighbors forming fight crews that defend immigrants [against] the Golden Dawn, right? It gets at some of the differences between actually the land campaign and the gold mining campaign. But more to our point here, it relies on a really sharp critique that we need to have of the environmental left. I also think from an ecological perspective that it's really important to understand the green left, because it's the left that's gonna sell out the next major social revolution in this country. You know, if the worker's left was the left that sold out the social revolution in the last century, it's going to be the green left that does it this time.

If you shift from being worried about what somebody's political identity is with reference to specific policies towards an issue of "Oh, can I act with this person? Do we have some kind of affinity?" If you shift from one to the other, you end up somewhere in the middle, because there's always going to be people with whom you share both political identity and affinity. But the real issue is affinity, not whether on paper, are we both environmentalists? OK, cool, I'm just a more radical version of them. No, we're something fundamentally different! And so affirming that means a real strong break with the left. I think that has to happen.

PANAGIOTI: All right. Strong break with the left. So we were fighting this campaign against Scripps, this biotech company who wanted to clear forests for building giant facilities. And their next proposal came up, and all the people who had compromised on the first victory were like, we can't touch this one—we basically told them anywhere but here. So it was just us who were left, and then the random wingnuts who also opposed Scripps because they needed $500 million of public money to move forward. Which left us basically hanging out with people in the fucking Tea Party, or like fiscal conservative circles. And most of the people I hang out with were not up for going to those meetings of Young Republicans and Tea Party people. I did. It mostly sucked, and I feel like I got to call people out and kind of expose them for their rhetoric being hollow. But then I'd occasionally find someone who was in the back of the room who would say "My god, they test on animals, that's disgusting!" Or would be critical about the corporate welfare element.

In 2003 when we were organizing for some semblance of a direct-action confrontation with the FTAA, we also went to the weird AFL-CIO luncheons and stuff, so we could find out who there was on board for being in a mass march so we could be present in the streets as well. So you know, yeah, I think we should break from the left. But the organized right isn't that interesting, or something a lot of people want to be part of. So yeah, hopefully we transcend those categories when we step into the realm of actually doing shit, you have to find people where they're at. And it takes more than who's hanging out in the break room at your job, you know?

NEAL: I was sort of searching for a concrete example of this affinity concept versus identity, and then Panagioti sort of like—that's exactly what I'm talking about, really. It's less a relationship with this institution or these groups between other groups, between other activist groups, and more of, well, it sucks doing the hard work of going to this meeting. But you don't go to engage with the AFL-CIO boss. You go to have a conversation with different people, and say, there's these three or four people who we have some affinity with and at least they're gonna tell us what their bosses are up to, etcetera. And that's really sort of what I'm suggesting.

And that's not a new suggestion; that's not something that anarchists aren't doing. Anarchists already do that all the time when we try and engage on a community level, locally or regionally,

we find ourselves having to play that awkward game. That happened a lot with Occupy. But I still think to an extent for whatever reason in ecological circles, there's still a fairly strong relationship with a lot of groups like RAN, even to an extent with Sierra Club, Greenpeace, etcetera. And there is this tendency where, especially if you look at the spectrum on which these groups operate, Earth First! really does look like a more radical version of them.

I'm not proposing that we don't have a strong ecological anarchist resistance movement. I'm proposing that any strong anarchist movement of any kind, but particularly a strong ecological anarchist movement, has to set as its goal breaking out of the limitations of what has been defined as activism. And if that doesn't happen, we start to fail. We start to ghettoize, we start to specialize, in particular. What we do becomes more and more specialized: you need 15 different kinds of special roles to pull off an action. You got your police liaison, you got your legal liaison… I think we should ask the question, how does that kind of protest look different than the kinds of moments that we have found exciting as anarchists?

The point is not to say, "well, if the only place we can start and begin from is activism, fuck it, I'm not gonna begin, I'm not doing anything." That's not what I'm proposing. I'm saying, if that's where we have to start from, fine, but let's be intentional about that being a model we're trying to break out of. And let's be conscious of why we're trying to break out of that model; let's include an analysis and critique, a self-critique of the model and how it keeps us where we are.

As long as we remain constrained in this campaign model, we are letting the way we do our anarchism, our rebellion, be defined by the state, which will forever keep it constrained. And so the goal has to be to consciously get out of that even though we start in that place. And that's not just an abstract observation; that actually concretely changes the kinds of things we choose to do and why we choose to do them, right? So I might not bother with a campaign that I know will end with a petition drive, even if it will win, right? Because it won't get to the points that I want to get to. Because I'm not oriented towards this immediate policy issue; I'm oriented towards something else.

PANAGIOTI: I might bother with the petition campaign, likely because I know the people who are initiating it or hoping to see it succeed in some way. In this recent victory against a nuke plant in Levy County, a rural county in North Florida, a beautiful place with more freshwater springs than anywhere in the world, it's like worth checking out. And people there really didn't want a fucking nuclear power plant to be built in the state forest in their backyard. And in the end, you know, the victory was mostly credited to the NGOs who hired attorneys to defeat it. But we were present with our little kind of small-scale action camp and some level of presence to express solidarity and support in a rural community that's probably never going to come to the city to participate in an insurrection. But it felt valuable and meaningful.

And I think it's important to figure out how to navigate the relationship between our feelings of urgency and what's actually really happening around us. Because sometimes they intersect and sometimes they're too far off to be useful, and I think that just comes with trying it. You know, sticking around for a couple decades and trying to see where it goes, where the things that you put effort into, where they result in ten years down the road. And you know, I understand feeling urgent and nervous about waiting that long, but… you do what you can, what seems to make sense to you in the moment, and a couple years down the line, you get to look at it and see what the results were and try something new. And if you haven't thought about sticking around for the next couple decades in this circle of people in the anarchist struggle, I hope that you'll

leave here, more than anything else we talked about, that you'll leave here thinking about that. OK, I'm going to stick around for the rest of my life in this and see how it goes.

CLARA: Well, what did you think, Alanis?

ALANIS: *Hm… I think they both made solid points, and didn't actually seem to be disagreeing most of the time. And certainly I agree that the new global context means we have to change how we orient ourselves towards eco-defense struggles and campaigns. But there's a point that seemed crucial to me that neither of them really touched on.*

Thinking back to our third episode on green anarchism, it seems like the thing that sets Earth First! apart from most other environmental groups is their biocentrism—you know, seeing the defense of the wild and living beings as an end in and of itself, not a means to an end. This insurrectionary position seems incompatible with biocentrism, because it evaluates eco-defense struggles based on whether or not they open up new affinities and ruptures, instead of whether or not they successfully defend the earth. In that sense, the insurrectionary position is actually more similar to the green left's arguments that we should protect land and wildlife because it's good for the economy, or tourism, or recreation, or whatever. In all of these cases, the value isn't life for itself, but as a means to something else that's valued more highly. It matters very much whether or not you win a particular campaign if you live in the watershed of the land that's about to be hydrofracked, or for the living things in a forest threatened with clear-cutting, right? For Earth First!ers who value life for its own sake, it seems like you would reject the notion that eco campaigns are only valuable as a means to another end—even if that end is anti-capitalist revolution.

CLARA: *But I think the critique is that single-issue campaigns, whether or not they win their goals, aren't succeeding at catalyzing the kinds of broader revolts that actually have the potential to topple capitalism—and isn't anti-capitalist revolution that halts the ecocidal economy the only way to actually defend the earth in the long term?*

ALANIS: *Well, yeah, I think so, and I think both of the debaters would agree. But that's a question of the best strategy towards the goal of defending the environment, separate from the question I'm trying to raise of whether defending any particular piece of it is a means to that broader end or an end in and of itself. Either way, we gotta rethink our strategy for eco-defense, when rebellion and recuperation come at a faster and faster pace. But I don't think Earth First!ers are gonna abandon biocentrism for the idea that these struggles are only worthwhile as means to an insurrectionary end.*

CLARA: *I'm still a little unclear about what's being proposed when we talk about affinity versus political identity. "Affinity" seems pretty vague for such a central concept to the insurrectionist critique. I mean, political identity isn't in opposition to affinity; it's a particular type of affinity, as is living in the same neighborhood or getting along as friends or whatever else. The question is how useful any particular type of affinity is as a basis for struggle, right? And I get that the critique is that political identity, i.e., calling yourself a radical or an environmentalist or an anarchist or whatever, isn't the central basis for affinity in contemporary struggles. The examples they talked about from Occupy and such makes that clear. But I'm not sure that I'm convinced that other more informal types of affinity are actually stronger or more reliable.*

Against Resilence: The Katrina Disaster & The Politics of Disavowal, by John Clark

Part I of II

Forgetting Commemoration

About a week ago, New Orleans went through the ten-year commemoration of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. In fact, there were several quite divergent modes of commemoration. At one end of the spectrum there was the Tenth Annual Katrina March and Second-line, the most serious political event of the day, which sponsored speeches and performances at the site of the levee break in the devastated and still depopulated Lower Ninth Ward. It had a significant turnout, though certainly under a thousand participants.

At the other extreme was the *Krewe* of O.A.K, which practiced a kind of "commemorating by not commemorating" in its annual Mid-Summer Mardi Gras parade and celebration. O.A.K. stands for "Outrageous and Kinky," in addition to "Oak St.," its starting point at the Maple Leaf Bar. The parade, noted for its wild costumes and zany ambience, attracted perhaps 10,000 to this Carrollton neighborhood event. According to the *Times-Picayune*, the Krewe chose the theme "Tie Dye Me Up," to evoke the famous "Summer of Love," and "bring good vibes to this annual parade." It added: "No mention of the 'K' word, please."

Most of the "Katrina 10" activities fell somewhere between the two extremes, but tended more in the direction of the Krewe of O.A.K., in that they were overwhelmingly in a *celebratory mode*. This was certainly true of the official commemoration that was sponsored by the city administration and local businesses. It focused on recovery, economic and educational successes, and, above all, the remarkable "resilience" of the local community. It presented an upbeat official narrative that erased many of the ongoing problems and tragedies of the city, in addition to effacing many of the most significant struggles and achievements of the community, when these did not fit into the official story. The major concerns here will be this official narrative, which pictures the city's post-Katrina history through the distorting lens of a politics of disavowal, and the many realities that this narrative disavows.

What then, is "disavowal?" It is in fact something that is quite common in everyday experience, and which we have all experienced many times. We often face two psychological processes in which truth is negated. One of these, "denial," is a defense mechanism in which the truth can never be consciously recognized or spoken. Denial is *silence*. The other process, "disavowal," is a defense mechanism in which the truth is at times recognized or spoken, but is systemically forgotten or silenced at every decisive moment, when it really counts. Disavowal is *re-silence*. The Hurricane Katrina Ten-Year Anniversary has been primarily a celebration of disavowal and re-silencing.

Resilence Kills

Much of this re-silencing has gone under the banner of "resilience." While this term has been used throughout the post-Katrina period, it has become a kind of watchword and rallying-cry for the official commemoration and the politics of disavowal that it expresses. Even beyond its ideological uses, it is in some ways a strange term to use to describe post-Katrina New Orleans. Resilience is defined as "The capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape" and "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."[1]

Neither of these definitions describes post-Katrina New Orleans terribly well. As for the "strained body" part, consider this. If someone had a serious accident or disease and after ten years is alive and doing tolerably well—except at only three-fourths of his or her original size—we wouldn't think of that as the most admirable of recoveries. There are also problems with the "easily" part. Harry Shearer deserves much credit for defying the forces of complacency and self-satisfaction and boldly popularizing the term "the Big Uneasy."[2] Whether New Orleanians have fully recovered or not, the last ten years have not been particularly "easy' for most of them. Maybe these long years weren't so hard for those who had the good fortune to be extremely wealthy, delusional, comatose, or dead. But for a large segment of the rest, they have been difficult and even excruciating.

But the major problem with the term is its ideological use. In Post-Katrina New Orleans, "resilience" is associated with tendencies toward regression and mindless compliance. The voice of resilience says, "Congratulations, you're still here! (Those of you who are still here)," and asks, "How about doing a second line, or cooking up some gumbo for the tourists?" It asks, a bit more delicately, "How about making their beds, cleaning their toilets, serving their food and drinks, maybe even selling them some drugs, and doing a special dance for them at the club." It urges, above all, "Be resilient. Be exactly what you are expected to be."

The ideology of resilience ignores the extraordinary creative achievements and visionary aspirations of New Orleanians in the post-Katrina period, and celebrates survival, bare life. It focuses instead on the community's continued existence as a site for imposition of corporate-state hierarchically-formulated development plans. All the compliments to the people of New Orleans for being resilient are a bit condescending and demeaning. After all, it's not the greatest tribute to people to compliment them on their ability to survive. "Thank you for not just giving up and dying *en masse*. If you had done that, it would have been somewhat of an embarrassment to the greatest country in the world."

The real post-Katrina story is not a story of resilience. More on this later, but if you want to see the real post-Katrina story, check out the film *Big Charity*.[3] It's an account of heroic courage and dedication to saving lives and caring for the community. It's a story of crimes against humanity that are systematically repressed and forgotten. If you want to see the real post-Katrina story (in this case, of the larger region of Southeast Louisiana), check out the film *My Louisiana Love*.[4] It's the story of passionate struggle for the beloved community and the beloved land. It's another

[1] "Full definition of Resilience" in *MerriamWebster Dictionary*; online at http://www.merriam-webster. com/ dictionary/resilience.

[2] See the website for his film *The Big Uneasy*; online at http://www.thebiguneasy.com/.

[3] See the website for *Big Charity: The Death of America's Oldest Hospital*; online at http://www. bigcharity-film.com/.

[4] Website for *My Louisiana Love*; online at http:// www.mylouisianalove.com/.

story of crimes against humanity, and also against nature, that are systematically repressed and forgotten. Both sides of this story, the nobility of struggle and dedication on the one hand, and the criminality and betrayal on the other, are lost in the fog of resilience. They are lost in the resilencing process. They are lost in the Official Story. It is versions of this Official Story that were presented by former President Bush, President Obama, and Mayor Landrieu as part of the official Katrina commemoration.

The Official Story: The Bush Version

According to Former President George W. Bush's typically blunt and non-nuanced judgment, "New Orleans is back, and better than ever." In fact, he is *amazed* by what has happened in New Orleans. This is not so astounding, since he specializes in being amazed. He was amazed by the atrocities of September 11, 2001, claiming that "nobody could have predicted" that there would be an attack on the World Trade Center—though about ten years before there had been an attack on the World Trade Center. Hint! He was amazed by the post-Katrina flood in 2005, exclaiming that no one could have "anticipated the breach of the levees"—though several experts actually did, and it had already happened in recent memory during Hurricane Betsy.[5] Hint!

So we should not be surprised, much less amazed, by Bush's reaction to Post-Katrina New Orleans in 2015: "Isn't it amazing?" What amazes him is that "the storm nearly destroyed New Orleans and yet, now, New Orleans is the beacon for school reform,"[6] But what alternative universe does he inhabit? On Planet W, "the storm nearly destroyed New Orleans?" But what storm? Hurricane Katrina didn't hit New Orleans and even what missed New Orleans had lost much of its force by the time its winds came our way. The disaster was not a storm, but rather flooding caused by criminal governmental and corporate negligence. Furthermore, over a quarter of New Orleans was not damaged at all by the storm and flooding and most of the rest could have recovered relatively easily given a reasonable level of response and support.[7] What should be truly astounding is that the victimizers of the city made the recovery so difficult for the victims. Bush should also not be amazed by the quasi-privatization of the school system, since his own administration was responsible for promoting exactly the kind of predatory opportunism and disaster capitalism that produced that system.

Does Bush remember *anything* about what actually happened? Please excuse the foolish question. Of course, he has no idea, and he's counting on everyone else to forget, if they ever knew. As he twice implores of his listeners, *"I hope you remember what I remember."* This recalls the delusional wife-killer Fred Madison in *Lost Highway*, David Lynch's classic story of monumental forgetfulness. As Fred announces, unconsciously diagnosing his delusional rewriting of history,

[5] Hurricane Betsy was a larger hurricane than Hurricane Katrina and hit New Orleans directly, with the latter passing slightly west of the city. .

[6] Cain Burdeau and Jeff Amy "George W. Bush Visits Disaster Zone, 10 Years After Katrina" (Associated Press, Aug. 28, 2015); online at http:// hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_KATRINA_BUSH?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT.

[7] It is significant, and not widely known, that 28% of housing units in the city were not damaged, and 58% were not damaged seriously. See Rachel E. Luft with Shana Griffin, "A Status Report on Housing in New Orleans after Katrina: An Intersectional Analysis" in Beth Willinger, ed. *Katrina and the Women of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, Dec. 2008); online at http:// webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=- cache:jd9AwzZZSWgJ:https://tulane.edu/ newcomb/upload/NCCROWreport08-chapter5. pdf+&cd=8&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

"I like to remember things my own way." Similarly, Bush's voice is the voice of denial. Never even reaching the level of *re-silence*, it is just dumb silence about anything that counts.

The Official Story: The Obama Version

Curiously, the same day that Obama visited New Orleans I got an email from him saying, "Let me be perfectly frank—I'm emailing to ask you for $5 . . . ."[8] My first thought was, "Why don't you pass by so I can give you the $5 in person! That would give me a chance to be perfectly frank too, and explain how things in post-Karina New Orleans are not quite as rosy as you've been painting them to be." I was about to send the email to Air Force One, and then it occurred to me that Obama's problem is not really a lack of information, as his Katrina speech in fact confirmed.

Admittedly, Obama's speech was infinitely better than the ramblings of Bush, whose unfortunate native tongue is English As A Second Language. Obama usually manages to combine a certain amount of intelligent and lucid analysis (even if it is often intelligently and lucidly deceptive) with a calculated folksiness aimed at mitigating any sins of excessive sophistication and erudition.

Folksiness prevailed in his Katrina anniversary address, which gets the award for more clichés per sentence than any speech ever given here, and perhaps anywhere else on Planet Earth. In just the first paragraph, he managed to dispose of many of the obligatory local references, including "Where y'at," "the Big Easy," "the weather in August," "shrimp po' boy," "Parkway Bakery and Tavern," "Rebirth," "the Maple Leaf," "Mardi Gras," and "what's Carnival for."[9]

But the agenda was basically about re-silencing. Obama enthusiastically promoted the neoliberal corporate capitalist project, including the quasi-privatization and de-democratization of the local schools. He actually citied some damning statistics about child poverty and economic inequality in New Orleans. And he noted that the city "had for too long been plagued by structural inequalities." "Had been" before Hurricane Katrina, that is. But this brief moment of quasi-recognition was lost in the deluge of upbeat generalization. He told the city that "the progress that you have made is remarkable" in achieving, among other things, a "more just New Orleans." In case we didn't get his point, he added, "The progress you've made is remarkable." So we are told that post-Katrina New Orleans is not only a model of opportunity for entrepreneurs and developers, as the Chamber of Commerce will enthusiastically inform us, but also a model for *progress in justice*.

Obama's voice is clearly the voice of disavowal. He knows the truth, and he can even tell you that he knows it. But this truth is consigned to footnotes and asides to a larger ideological pseudo-truth that is to be the focus of our attention. The truth is there only to be strategically forgotten. The dominant discourse remains the verbose but empty speech of re-silencing. So much for *les Menteurs en Chef*.

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[8] Barack Obama, "important (don't delete)." An email from Barack Obama at dccc@dccc.org to John Clark at clark@loyno.edu (Thu 8/27/2015 11:59 AM).

[9] "Transcript of President Obama's Katrina speech" in *NOLA.com* (August 28, 2015); online at http://www.nola.com/katrina/index.ssf/2015/08/transcript_of_president_obamas.html. Fortunately somebody caught him before he told the crowd "jockamo fee nané."

The Official Story: The Landrieu Version

Next, the local political and corporate establishment, led by mayor Mitch Landrieu, joined in the celebration. For the anniversary, Landrieu and Walmart, along with other corporate entities, co-sponsored a "Citywide Day of Service." It's unfortunate that the community couldn't organize a large-scale volunteer effort itself, as it did after Katrina, when our state and corporate masters largely abandoned the city, except as opportunities emerged for incarceration and then exploitation. The mayor's version of a "Day of Service" was four hours of service projects in the morning, followed by an hour of speeches and celebration, and then a break, before three more hours of speeches and celebration.

From Landrieu's perspective, there was much to celebrate. On his "Katrina 10: Resilient New Orleans" web site he claims that the Katrina disaster turned out to be a positive opportunity and as a result "New Orleans has turned itself around and has built the city that we should've built the first time."[10] Presumably the city had to wait 287 years for the current experiment in neo-liberal social engineering to arrive. Landrieu's boosterish assessment of Post-Katrina New Orleans can be summed up in his depiction of it as "America's best comeback story." In a blatant attempt to mislead readers, he boasts that "the New Orleans region has now returned to approximately 95 percent of its pre-Katrina population."[11] In fact, as a recent report shows, "New Orleans is now at about 78 percent of its population before the storm" and the recent growth rate has been 1.4%.[12] Aggregating the population with surrounding parishes is a transparent ploy to confuse the public.

Many have not come back to New Orleans because of lack of opportunities here and because the dominant model of development has created obstacles to their return. To make them disappear through fake statistics is an outrage. Landrieu obviously didn't grasp the ludicrous but painful irony of calling the post-Katrina era, in which almost a quarter of the population did not return, "the best *comeback story*" in US history!

Landrieu's voice is the voice of denial, deception and delusion. Let's be explicit about what is denied, silenced and re-silenced.

Part II will appear in *Black Seed Issue 5*

[10] Polly Mosendz, "New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu on the 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina" in *Newsweek* (August 29, 2015); online at http://www.newsweek.com/new-orleans-mayor-mitch-landrieu-10th-anniversary-hurricane-katrina-367046.

[11] Mitchell J. Landrieu, "About the Project," in *Katrina 10: Resilient New Orleans*; online at http:// katrina10.org/ about-the-project/.

[12] Jeff Adelson, "New Orleans area population still growing post-Katrina, but slowly: Post-Katrina increase slows to a plateau," in *The New Orleans Advocate* (March 28, 2015); online at http://www. theneworleansadvocate.com/news/ 11941581-172/ new-orleans-area-population-still.

The Roots of a New Practice: An Interview With Knowing the Land is Resistance

I first heard about the group Knowing the Land is Resistance on the *Earth First! Newswire* or some other such website. It was at once both a pleasant reminder that I needed to get off the computer, and a bit of inspiration that is often missing in anarchy land.

The group is based in the occupied territory currently known as Hamilton, Ontario. They've produced three excellent zines—two called *Knowing the Land is Resistance* and a third called *Towards an Anarchist Ecology*. The writing—at times beautiful—relates their experiences becoming (re)acquainted with the land in their area and urges readers to pursue the deeper questions regarding the alienated and damaged relationships that many of us have with the land.

OXALIS: What is Knowing the Land is Resistance? How did the project get started—what initially motivated you all to pursue this path of exploration?

KNOWING THE LAND IS RESISTANCE: Mostly, we really wanted to celebrate all the wild spaces we love, how these places sustain our courage in our lives and resistance. We wanted to encourage other folks to connect with the health, healing and hope that exist in the land.

We started out by doing workshops, inviting folks to go out into the then-wintery wild corners of the city and pretty simply just encouraging them to treat themselves to some quality forest time. We wrote a report-back from the first workshop and published it in *Mayday Magazine*, a local monthly magazine, along with some reflections from talking with workshop participants about breaking down the alienation imposed by city life. We continued writing monthly features based on exploring the wild spaces in the area and those texts became the first two KLR zines.

There was a strong intention from the start to intertwine a love for the land with an anti-capitalist and anti-colonial dialogue. We knew rooting these ideas in the land where we live was a good way to make real and tangible those sometimes– obscure ideas and find ways to weave them into our everyday lives (not just our days off when we go deep into the forest).

O: One of the things that I immediately liked about your project was that the name "Knowing the Land is Resistance" seemed to contain the answer within it. Your choice eschews the usual approaches of choosing something cryptic or excessively militant—it suggests a slowness and sense of reflection that often seems missing from anarchist projects. Could you explain what you mean when you say "Knowing the Land is Resistance"?

KLR: The name really goes both ways: resistance without knowing the land is hollow and so is knowing the land without siding with it and fighting for it. Settlers today on Turtle Island especially have so much work to do in developing this connection, as we are possibly the most alienated from the earth of any humans ever before. We have a lot of respect for naturalists and their careful commitment to knowing and spending time with the land, even though it tends to be disengaged and conservative. We also have a lot of respect and love for the bravery and passion of anarchists and activists, even though these scenes are usually very uprooted and not grounded in place. KLR seeks to bridge gaps in those practices— hence the name.

We also know from listening to older and more experienced anarchists and land defenders that getting people out on contested land is the best way to get them caring about it enough to fight for it in a committed and sustained way. The slowness and sense of reflection you are referring to reflects the fact that our projects are long-term and take a lot from us in terms of care and commitment.

O: In your writings, you have suggested a deeper and closer connection to the land could strengthen existing social struggles. For example, you speak of gentrification and Hamilton and imply that those efforts could be strengthened with a more land– based approach. Can you elaborate on this? Also, what are some social struggles that embody the approaches—or at least the orientation—that you are suggesting?

KLR: Gentrification, for instance, is very concerned with controlling space. It wants to rationalize space, strip the wild out of it, including ungoverned actions by humans, and bring marginal areas back into the economy. An example in our neighbourhood is the obsessive mowing of once-healthy meadows to make space for sod and security cameras – cutting down trees, tidying up vacant lots and alleyways, all this opens space up to technologies of control and destroys habitat. We know the people being displaced further east, and we knew the foxes and coyotes who would follow the tracks here before the massive new commuter train station came. We know how much less space there is for kids to play in trees and wild spaces outside of city logic now. In knowing these things, it's hard to argue that gentrification and progress is anything that improves lives. It's about destroying life and imposing control, and it's the opposite of health – we explored this in more detail in our workshop series, North End Raccoon Walk. This knowledge was already in people's hearts, and simply giving folks the space and permission to love areas that are normally considered blight was enough for all sorts of ideas to emerge.

It's tragic to see a brownfield that's been slowly healing for thirty years made into a short-sighted condo project, especially when we understand that developments like this also reproduce ways of life and relating to the land that are opposed to healing. It's about placing land back in the logic of economy, about rationalizing forgotten and slowly healing brownfields into short-sighted condo projects. Resisting development on the basis of rewilding and healing is a total refusal – there is very little possible compromise. It also brings with it a set of tactics, beginning with walks on sites that we're normally taught to fear and escalating towards occupations and blockades. All of these steps also break down private property and re-establish a sort of commons.

One example of this right now is in Kingston, Ontario, where folks are trying to prevent the construction of a new road over a river-side park. This road would allow the further development of both existing urban areas and of healing brownfields (and these are some of our favourites anywhere). Most of the opposition to the road shares its goal of putting a dirty, weedy park back into economic use, just not a road, but anarchists there are having traction emphasizing the importance of collective, ungoverned space, the defense of urban wildlands, and a watershed-scale understanding that even a former tannery site is important to the health of the whole region.

We saw other examples of this during our Seeds of Resistance tour, where we did nature–connection workshops for groups engaged in land defense or anti-development struggles. In Peterborough at that time, students were organizing to prevent a wetland adjacent to the university from being developed into a privately-owned but university-partnered dormitory, something they saw as a step towards privatization. They wanted to connect the arguments around priva-

tization to a defense of the wetland, but by spending time there, they developed ideas around unexpertness that could attack both universities and development at a much higher level.

O: While I enjoyed the two *Knowing the Land is Resistance* zines and the way that you all have undertaken a specific effort to get to know your land base (and indeed I feel the approach is one that more folks should take), *Towards an Anarchist Ecology* probably made the biggest impression on me as it seems to be your most theoretical work and had the most to offer folks outside of the Hamilton area. Can you explain what you mean by "anarchist ecology" for those who have not yet read the zine?

KLR: Amazing! That's so good to hear about because that was our intention. Those first two KLR zines are really specific to here where we live. They are good examples of what that process can be like, but unless they inspire you to go and get giddy about the place you live, the idea might be hard to share because it isn't easily distilled into words on a page. After doing that work for four years, we felt like it made sense to reflect and compile what we learned in a theory-based way: that's *Towards An Anarchist Ecology.* We wanted to celebrate liberatory approaches to a science, to a process of inquiry, like the cyborg witches in Spain and the work of some of our most inspiring herbalist friends.

Ecology is often seen as a progressive discipline in itself, because it tends to be less reductive and come more often into conflict with capitalism than other hard sciences. But we feel that the mainstream practice of ecology does not have liberatory potential and in fact has come to produce a new alienating hierarchy of experts that primarily serve to justify more and greener destruction of the wild.

It's one thing to offer a critique, but it's a bigger challenge to offer an alternative. The rest of the zine seeks to lay out five starting points for an anti-colonial, anti-authoritarian way of connecting with the land. These starting points are: rooted in relationships, deep listening, urban ecology, re-enchanting, and unexpertness. We have tried to identify and avoid the usual pitfalls of cultural appropriation, de-politicization, escape, expertly arrogance, and hastily jumping to an energetic or spiritual way of connecting. At the root of it, we believe that everyone, wherever they are, inhabits a watershed and is a dynamic living creature that is part of a complex and beautiful web of interrelationships. We can choose to ground ourselves in this truth, to connect with the land around us, and let the health of our communities guide our actions. We hope folks who pick up this guide find something in it to help you in breaking with this stifling society of control and in finding lives of freedom and wildness.

O: One thing I noticed while reading is that while you all speak to the importance of anarchy and anarchist approaches, there aren't a lot of direct references to the green anarchist tradition. Do you all have any connections to that trajectory of thought and has it influenced your project in any specific way?

KLR: We're definitely very influenced by green anarchy and see ourselves as part of that tradition. Particularly, we value the analysis of alienation from the wild and from each other as a state that was deliberately produced over centuries, and the anti-civ critique. However, one of our starting points for KLR was a sense that the green anarchist space was too ideologically motivated and not strongly rooted in place or personal connection. Flipping through old issues of GA, it's interesting how much the placelessness and focus on intellectual proofs in most of the articles recreates the kinds of alienation they set out to smash.

We set out to strip away some of our own ideological baggage and see if we couldn't reach green anarchist conclusions by developing our connection with our local landbase. The first two

KLR zines are a pretty good description of what this project looked like for us, here between the escarpment and Hamilton Bay. We found that not only could we reach similar conclusions (industrial civilization is killing the earth) but those conclusions often came along with concrete ways to ally with the health of the land.

A lot of other people set off from the green anarchist space in pursuit of rootedness around the same time we did, often by developing what's called primitive skills, and a lot of them ended up strongly influenced by the Wilderness Awareness School. Although we definitely draw from some of their ideas, we have some big wariness of the WAS, especially as it is explicitly hostile to struggle, glorifies colonization, and recreates a settler survivalist attitude. We have tried to offer a sustained critique of their practices while also pirating their best ones and creating alternatives.

Some of us have been spending time in EF! spaces lately, and we think there is a lot of potential there to relate more to the colonial history of the land and rooting direct action in a deeper relationship to the land. People there strongly desire that relationship and have a lot of courage, but there's not always a lot of willingness to consider meaningful decolonization and to face up to just how alienated we are from the land. Unfortunately, adopting green anarchist principles on the level of ideology, rather than the level of relationships, seems like it can actually make it harder to develop that relationship to the land, because of the sense that we do or should somehow just already have it by virtue of our identification with those principles.

O: Moving beyond writing and ideology, what for me seems most exciting about Knowing the Land is Resistance is that you are thinking through some of the big questions, for example, asking how we can develop relationships with the land and what that means when many of us live on land that has been wrecked by cities, civilization, and colonization. I was particularly struck by the way you talk about the importance of finding land and wildness in urban places. How have you all done this with your project and why was this an important to you?

KLR: It's so hard to face up to all the destruction and loss, but also so important. Even in the hearts of cities, the wild is always there, pushing back, waiting for us to return to it. Even on Hamilton's industrial piers, we find coyotes, seedlings, and brave poplar trees. The myth of the pristine wild space actually harms us at this point, because it devalues all the other land that is considered damaged. Yes, we need to protect those few remaining least-devastated spaces, but for the most part, that's not what wildness on this planet looks like any more. We need to grieve this loss while still centering ourselves around interconnected systems like watersheds. Looking at the health of a whole watershed makes it obvious that the patch of Junk Trees in the parking lot is doing important work to create health and habitat for the whole system. The myth of pristine wilderness always has us looking elsewhere for wildness, and feeling like we need to uproot ourselves in order to go find it, when in fact this is the opposite of useful. It sets us back in our own relationship to the land, and also is frequently damaging to those few remaining old growth places.

Having a connection to the land, even and especially in cities, helps us stay grounded and committed, even when things feel hopeless. It reminds us that amazing things are possible with a slow push towards deep relationships and a rejection of civilized ways, aligning our hearts to the moss and mullein creating soil on the concrete pads of abandoned fuel storage terminals…

O: Beyond personally becoming acquainted with the land, your collective has also toured Ontario and given numerous workshops that expand on the themes you raise. Your workshop guide—*Learning from the Land*—is quite impressive and is something that I could see being useful for a lot of readers of *Black Seed* who are interesting in encouraging similar conversations

and processes in their own areas. How has the response to the workshops been among participants? Have there been any successes or challenges that stand out? How have these workshops continued to surprise or excite you?

KLR: Probably the biggest surprise and most important challenge was how much fear and trauma can be brought out by engaging with our senses in the forest. It's not easy to enter the forest – sure, we can just walk in, but to really quiet our minds and be present can bring up overwhelming feelings of loss, inadequacy, alienation, fear, as well as traumatic memories. We need the voices of trees, the cool breath of the forest, and the presence of stars to feel healthy and strong, but when we begin to open ourselves to these things, we first encounter how much we've been hurt.

In each of our first several workshops, one or more participants would need to leave or would cry because of what was coming up for them. Once it was tied to memories of a childhood forest or meadow that became a clearcut or mall, another time it was a more recent lost land defense struggle, with the trauma of police violence combined with watching a piece of land and the life you had with it be destroyed. Other times it was less directly connected to specific stories about land, a more abstract despair or fear. In this way, our workshops came to focus on building relationships, with ourselves, with each other, and with the land. Can we find space to build some trust among strangers? Can we transform hurt and alienation back into possibility and wonder? Can we make this healing part of movements in real, physical defense of the land, and what does it mean to do so?

O: I find great affinity with the ways in which you all have chosen to write and talk about our relationship with the land, both in your writings and in your workshops. You use words like "wonder," "joy," "play," and "enchantment" to talk about how we relate to the land. I also liked how you de-emphasize "expertness" and formal plant names, stating that answers terminate thought and discussion, while questions lead to more questions. Could you elaborate on this a bit and how this philosophy relates to your overall approach?

KLR: It sounds like you know about the immensely fulfilling joy of connecting with the land, too! We talk about re-enchantment a lot, because we all have that freedom, play, joy and life inside of us. It's a constant struggle, for us and maybe everybody, to keep that stuff stoked and alive in this world. One way to push back is to reject the ugly, stifling idea of expertness. We find un-expertness inspiring because it destroys the myth that "someone else" is better equipped to deal with the massive, ongoing ecological destruction. We also want to go beyond the pretty toxic expertly behaviour that narrowly celebrates names and taxonomy in more naturalist-y spaces. We often hear people describe the reason they don't engage with wild spaces is because they don't know enough.

Finding time to be present, think deeply, and feel joy in connecting with the land can get us out of our heads and into our bodies. Generally, anarchists could use some more joy and play.

O: I also like how you talk about spirituality and encourage people to approach it cautiously. *Black Seed* has been interested in fostering a conversation about spirituality and green anarchy. Why do you urge caution around this topic?

KLR: It's pretty understandable that people seek to fill the void of alienation created by this society with something positive, something that promises a deeper connection to the wild. However, our experience is that often people want to rush to talking about magic, animal spirits, literally hearing words from trees, that sort of thing, while skipping over the long, hard work of getting to know their landbase on its own terms. Similar magical practices exist in various in-

digenous landbased traditions around the world, but for settlers (especially white settlers) living in the land called North America, we need to appreciate just how gone those traditions are for us. They are really, really gone. There isn't an older, earth-based culture for settlers still clinging to existence on the margins of industrial society, the way there was in Europe until the end of the 1700s. There is nowhere for us to escape to when we realize the lives and worldviews we have been given are crap.

The project of rebuilding a land-based tradition for uprooted people is a beautiful one, but it can only be a humble and slow starting place for settlers, and potentially a multi-generational project. Around the world, spiritual knowledge is held and passed on by wise elders, drawing on knowledge and traditions accumulated over generations and rooted in intricate knowledge of the relationships between the plants, animals, waters, and lands of their territories. It isn't respectful to the beauty of earth-based cultures to think we can somehow get around the absence of elders and traditions just by wanting to. We believe that learning to really pay attention to the wild, to observe it with our physical senses, learning to read the land and understand how to ally with its health is the best starting point for this exploration.

O: I see the conversation around spirituality as being quite connected to how we talk about colonization and what it means in the context of folks living on stolen land. I also feel as though it—spirituality for lack of a better term—has at least some type of relationship to science as an alternative way of looking at the world. In your writings you have been critical of science and what you call "dominator ecology." What do you mean by "dominator ecology"? At the risk of setting up a simplistic binary, do you see criticisms of science and discussions of spirituality as being connected?

KLR: We decided to describe the mainstream science of ecology as "dominator ecology" to refocus attention on the power relationships created by the practice of science as it is commonly carried out. "[It] is the ecology of management from a distance, and of remote expertise, that sees itself as fundamentally separate from the land, inhabiting a present without a past or future." In *Towards an Anarchist Ecology* we further trace out how the practice of dominator ecology upholds colonial and capitalist structures while enforcing our alienation from the land by situating it as the realm of experts. We see reclaiming inquiry and the roots of science as absolutely vital in rebuilding a connection to the land, which will lay the groundwork for any land-based spirituality that might arise.

We need to critique and fight dominator science to create space for us to trust our own experiences again, while reclaiming from it the tools we might need. We also need to prevent the space created in this way from being hastily filled by a supposed spirituality that projects our assumptions about the land back onto it, recreates our own alienation from it by trapping us in our own egos and imaginings, and supports new claims of unaccountable knowledge.

It might sound like we're being really hard on spirituality, but it's because we consider it to be too important a project to move hastily. There is a huge grief involved in recognizing that we truly are alienated from the land, that there is no easy way out, that we really are so ignorant. We need to truly feel that and cultivate humility in the sorts of knowledge we claim access to. Our experience is that observing the wild closely and honestly leads inevitably to action in its defense and to clashes with power—the more these clashes are collective and sustained, the more we build a community that orients its values in line with the health of the wild. Such a community is the soil from which any spiritual practice might (re)grow.

In particular, we've found close observations of healing wildlands to be full of profound truths about how to live in this world. Take a walk down the traintracks, through old brownfields, rewilding farmlands, old quarries, around abandoned houses and buildings, and you'll see the plants and creatures who are courageously facing up to the utter devastation and who are working hard to recreate health and resiliency even in the most damaged places. Learning to appreciate the work being done by plants with deep taproots like chicory, burdock, and curly dock, for instance, not only inspires us to fight for health in hard situations, but gives us practical ideas about how this can be done. These are the roots of a new practice.

O: Finally, what has your collective been up to recently? How do you see your work continuing in the future?

KLR: We haven't been that active as a closed collective in the past few years. One big reason why we stepped back from KLR (at least for now) was it felt like we were beginning to occupy an expert-like role— it felt pretty silly to let ourselves become the experts in unexpertness. Our goal as KLR was to develop and then freely share simple practices for an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist way of connecting to the land, and we felt that through thirty or so workshops, our zines and posters, and the *Learning from the Land* guide, we had got some of these ideas out there. Continuing in the way we had as a closed collective didn't feel like it was in service to this goal.

These days, we like to encourage and support anyone who sets out to connect with the land, especially those who are determined to act. We continue to distro our resources and to support others in putting on workshops or developing actions. We love taking part in conversations about land defense, especially about spreading the practice of long-term land defense occupations in settler communities as a way of developing collective knowledge and practice of allying with the health of the land. We have also been prioritizing modeling good security culture and encouraging people to take this seriously in land defense.

Corrosive Consciousness — Part I: How One Might Profane Green Platonism, by Bellamy Fitzpatrick

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a selection from a failed debate with Kevin Tucker intended to be published in issue #2 of *Black & Green Review*. KT rejected this because he desired the debate to be constrained to the question of egoism (pro or con) and the author desired to make a broader case. We will publish the rest of this argument, the author's positive case for egoism, in *Black Seed* Issue 5

> *"The primal war is a spiritual war. It began as the spirit of wildness was buried. . . ."*
> -Kevin Tucker, "Egocide"

> *"To be sure, to speak of spirit and the good as Plato did meant standing truth on her head and denying perspective itself, the basic condition of all life."*
> -Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good And Evil*[1]

The history of Western philosophy can be divided, very crudely but nonetheless meaningfully, into two[2] broad strands depending on assumptions, or lack thereof, about lived experience. One tendency—calling itself in its various incarnations Realism, Christianity, scientific materialism, and so forth—begins not from *the real* of our lived experience but instead with a presupposition about *what the world is* really *like*, positing something greater, deeper, or truer than what we feel. It follows from a presupposition like this one that our lived experience is only a pale reflection or echo of what is seen as the fundamental truth. This speculative, reifying mode "finds its origin in Platonic philosophy and has been dominant from the very beginning."[3] I will call this mode of thinking, broad and varied as it is, Platonism, for the purposes of this essay, as I think its roots are meaningful and highlight its tendency toward reification and morality.[4]

The second tendency—a perpetual minority that has been called or has called itself perspectivism, egoism, existentialism, nihilism, and other names—considers phenomenality, lived experience, to be prior to and to take precedence over any such reifying speculation. Knowledge and value come from phenomenality, are felt in the flesh, and are always instrumental and provisional rather than aiming at an imagined ultimate, objective reality disembodied from moment-to-moment existence. I will in this part of the essay analyze Anarcho-Primitivism from this

[1] Special thanks to Roufus H. Byrd for reminding me of this line and for a wonderful conversation that contributed to this essay.

[2] This taxonomy may, and I suspect does, apply to philosophical thought in general, beyond the Western tradition. I am framing it this way due to my relative familiarity with Western thought and relative ignorance of non-Western perspectives.

[3] Bell, David F. Introduction to *Joyful Cruelty: Toward a Philosophy of the Real* by Clément Rosset.

[4] Note that, by this definition, most anarchists are Platonists, as most engage with some kind of alienated conception of the Good, like Humanity, Justice, or Social Progress.

perspective; in part two, I will argue that this second tendency is an essentially anarchist mode of thinking.

Exiting the Madhouse: Moving Toward a Truly Critical Theory

> *"Man, your head is haunted. . . . I regard those persons who cling to the Higher . . . almost the whole world of men, as veritable fools, fools in a madhouse."*
> -Max Stirner, *The Ego And Its Own*

The madhouse is civilization,[5] and the fools are those who, not only in their actions, thinking, and language; but also, unfortunately, in their critical theory, spend a great deal of their activity reproducing it every day.

History is rife with examples of critical theory that purport to liberate humans (and, rarely, nonhumans) from domination, exploitation, and alienation. Nearly all of them, however, criticize "particular forms of enslavement merely in order to substitute other forms of enslavement."[6] In order to be consistently and thoroughly liberatory, then, a critical theory cannot simply effectively critique one aspect of civilization or a particular manifestation of it, nor can it stop at critiquing every aspect and manifestation of all extant and historical civilizations.

Instead, thoroughgoing critical theory must effectively critique *all possible* forms of domination, exploitation, and alienation—it must provide a moment-to-moment practice of critique that allows for perpetual yet always provisional analysis leading to potentially immediate action. In doing so, it allows one to be critical not only of present civilizations, but also possible future iterations of domination and exploitation, the reemergence of alienated lifeways and modes of thought, and the inadequacies of present and future partial liberation theories.

Anarcho-Primitivism (AP)—in spite of contributing importantly to the anti-civilization critique—fails in this regard because it does not break free of the speculative Platonic tendency, that essentially civilized mode of thinking. AP therefore seeks totalizing truths that render the world absolutely knowable, recapitulating an ideology of control and measurement; draws sacred moral lines where they do not exist in the biosphere; posits objective and transcendental values and entities, reifying aspects of our phenomenality; and succumbs to the same dualistic logic that has characterized classical anarchism. I will examine only a few specific instances of these issues here, due to constraints of scope: the vagaries of domestication, the mystification and sacralization of wildness, and the Manichaeism that motivates and unites both.

[5] Many discussions of civilization are hampered by a lack of a clear definition of the subject. Briefly, by civilization, I mean a way of human life characterized by the growth of cities, areas of urban population sufficiently dense as to require the routine importation of food from corresponding rural surroundings characterized by agriculture. Civilized life generally includes all of the following, to varying degrees: collective activity tightly organized around a linear and numerical conception of time; a high level of ritual and symbolic culture; complex and explicit social hierarchy; political representation; the formation of a State, which attempts to monopolize the use of physical violence and delegitimize non-State violence; bureaucracy; compulsory labor (work); and societal mores and ideology rationalizing racial or cultural supremacy, dominance of nature, and social progress. As I will argue later, an additional important characteristic, which subsumes all of the above, is highly reified thinking and social roles.

[6] McQuinn, Jason, "Critical Self-Theory," *Modern Slavery*, volume 3, C.A.L. Press.

The Vagaries of Domestication

It is seductive to talk of domestication in anarchist theory: it applies ideas of domination we have already come to understand in a new dimension. The idea that our present crisis is caused by dominating Nature—or burying the spirit of wildness, as you prefer—implies, when it is not already explicitly stated, that we might exit this nightmare by simply learning how to stop dominating and somehow negating those who refuse to stop. It is thus a recapitulation of egalitarian tendencies of thought that consider liberation to be tantamount to the elimination of power. It is easy to talk to anarchists about power; for many, it is already a placeholder for *bad*. Indeed, Tucker, at the 2014 Philadelphia Anarchist Bookfair, summarized anarchist theory as *the search to identify and eliminate power*; green anarchy's contribution, he continued, has been identifying that power with agriculture, with domestication—it is a pleasingly elegant, readily comprehensible critique that implies the familiar Manichaean theme.

To effectively avoid doing something, one needs to know clearly what it is; but when it comes to defining domestication, APs have been vague, tending toward moralistic, quasi-religious, and maudlin language. John Zerzan has defined it at his most sober as "the attempt to bring free dimensions under control for self-serving purposes"[7] and elsewhere, with metaphysical adventurousness, as "a cosmic change"[8] —sacred lines are being crossed, one is to understand. Kevin Tucker has been more erratic, either clearly defining or vaguely gesturing at domestication in a wide variety of ways:

- Though Kevin at times appears very conscious of the accusations of religiosity that have fallen on AP, he nonetheless endorses Chellis Glendinning by saying "the original trauma of domestication is a deep wound."[9] Here, domestication is perhaps our Fall.
- Elsewhere, he seems to agree with Zerzan's "cosmic change", describing it as relating to metaphysical erasure or transformation: "Domestication is the destruction of the soul."[10] or "Domesticated plants and animals replace wildness."[11]
- Domestication also seems at times to be naturalized, synonymous with socialization, as when "Our submission to the system is our domestication,"[12] described as "the internalized system: the cop, missionary, politician, economist, and worker in our heads."[13]
- Most mundanely, Kevin often refers to dependency, perceived dependency, and control to characterize domestication.

How is domestication so many different things? If it is, then is it actually a useful term? At times, domestication is even contradictory things, as when "Our own self domestication has not changed who we are"[!][14] – so it does not seem to create or prescribe different metaphysical

[7] Zerzan, John. "Enemy of the State: Interview with John Zerzan," by Derrick Jensen. *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization.* Feral House, 2002.

[8] Quoted from his public debate at Stanford University with transhumanist Zoltan Istvan. Available on YouTube as "Zoltan vs Zerzan."

[9] Tucker, Kevin. "Egocide," *For Wildness and Anarchy.* FC Press and Black and Green Press, 2010.

[10] Tucker, "The Witch and the Wildness," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

[11] Tucker, "Agents of Change: Primal War and the Collapse of Global Civilization," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

[12] Tucker, "The Disgust of Daily Life," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

[13] Tucker, "The Witch and the Wildness."

[14] Tucker, "Agents of Change: Primal War and the Collapse of Global Civilization," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

categories, after all – or "domestication is not some monolithic and irreversible event in the past, but a constant reality that we recreate daily through our own lives"[15] – and so it is therefore not an original trauma or Fall, which is a decidedly singular event.

Domestication, then, as Kevin deploys it, is a *margarine-word*, a word "whose function is to circulate, not to mean."[16] It is used less to convey information than to indicate the user holds a certain moral position. This residue gleams clearly in certain moments, as when Kevin writes: "The one message that I hope people can learn from the history of domestication is that humans, like any other animal, aren't meant to control the world around it [sic] and dictate its relationships."[17] There are things we must not do, and one of them is to control the world around us; but the phrase "control the world" is as vague as "domestication."

We cocreate one another's worlds: my phenomenality is inseparable from myself—it constitutes me—and I am therefore a multifarious being composed of every other being that I encounter. Intimacy and symbiosis are cocreation, meaning that creatures are continually shaping one another. But this cocreation is not a lack of control or a surrender of power, it is a simultaneous competition and cooperation of powers. Do we not all control each other's worlds, as we are the constituents of one another's worlds? Where does symbiosis end and domestication begin?

I have written elsewhere in greater length and depth that power, control, and interdependence as well as more one-sided dependence are rampant among nonhumans: orchids sexually deceive their pollinators, parasitic barnacles castrate their hosts and hijack their reproductive organs, and leafcutter ants engage in quasiagriculture.[18] Through co-evolution and symbiosis, species are constantly shaping and influencing each other.

I thus cannot take seriously the idea that power, control, and dependency are what problematize inter-organismal relationships. A Foucauldian analysis of power, normally understood in terms of inter-human relationships, seems equally applicable to ecology: exertions of power characterize all interactions and are inescapable—indeed, Stirner and Nietzsche seem to have understood beings as iterations of force and the act of being alive as consisting of exertions of power, the cessation of which is one's death. Rather than run from power, control, and dependency, drawing nonsensical, life-denying barriers around them; we might instead acknowledge and seek to understand our power over other organisms, how we are shaping them and they us. It is not that everything is bad," but that everything is dangerous," and we may thus move toward a "hyper—and pessimistic"[19] awareness of what our power means and how it can be more life-affirming.

Other takes on ecology contrast with Kevin's moralistic one—that seeks, Platonically, to carve nature into joints, the good and the bad—and refuse this dualism. Permaculturist Bill Mollison famously argued that everything gardens, that is, every organism exerts power to create a favorable environment for itself: the bacterium *Lactobacillus*, for one, shits lactic acid that favors itself and its conspecifics but inhibits the growth of many competing molds and bacteria—this act is power, this act is an effort "to control the world [...] and dictate its relationships." Former

[15] Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field: The Consequences of Domestication," *For Wildness and Anarchy*.

[16] de Acosta, Alejandro, "To Acid-Words," *The Impossible*, Patience, Little Black Cart (Ardent Press), 2014.

[17] Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field: The Consequences of Domestication," *For Wildness and Anarchy*.

[18] The piece is written but presently unpublished. It will be published in an upcoming Enemy Combatant pamphlet on egoist conceptions of ecology. It is a response to John Zerzan's "Animal Dreams," which was printed in the first issue of *Black Seed*.

[19] Foucault, Michel. Interview, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress."

Animal Liberation Front member Rod Coronado spoke in an interview conducted by Tucker of being inspired by the way predators exert a domineering presence.[20] Nietzsche saw life as continually overcoming itself, always surging forth in new forms. When I envision the ichneumon wasp injecting its eggs and mutualistic viruses into a host, seizing control of its body, I am moved similarly to see a kind of ecstatic and violent act of life overcoming itself.

I of course agree with Tucker that there is a horrific dimension to many of our human-nonhuman relationships; certainly, he is getting at something important. To tease out what this horror is more empirically and less morally, we might paraphrase permaculturist Toby Hemenway's definition of agriculture:[21] the process by which ecosystems are annihilated and turned into human beings and their domesticates, resulting in an economic surplus that encourages the creation of rulers to oversee it, slaves to harvest it, bureaucrats to measure it, guards to protect it, and an ideology to rationalize the whole disgusting process. And there our focus is revealed: it is not the hazy act of domestication, inveigled as it is with co-evolution and symbiosis and fraught with vague and moralistic condemnations like dependence and control; rather, it is *the social and ecological relationships* that emerge from certain forms of power exertion that are problematic. The recent anarchist interest in M. Kat Anderson's *Tending the Wild* and the ideas of permaculturists like Hemenway, Mollison, and Fukuoka seems to be a healthy recognition of the fact that high levels of human-nonhuman cocreation, control, coevolution, and interdependence are not only inescapable but also not necessarily undesirable, as they need not engender the massive biotic denuding, exploitation, and alienation that characterize civilization.

The Elusive and Sacred Wildness

> *"When we learn to open ourselves to wildness [...] the organic anarchy of our beings will flow."*
> *"That spirit is what connects an individual to the [...] wildness around them."*
> *"Wildness that flows between living beings . . ."*
> - Kevin Tucker
> *For Wildness And Anarchy*

> *"Constantly regard the universe as one living being, having one substance and one soul . . . and how all things act with one movement; and how all things are the cooperating causes of all things that exist."*
> – Marcus Aurelius
> Stoic Emperor of Rome

As a foil to domestication, Tucker frequently evokes "wildness," which exhibits the same slippery qualities of seeming to define decidedly different things. With possible self-transparency and hesitation, Tucker often deploys the word with a vanguard and rearguard of qualifiers and negative descriptions.[22] Nevertheless, the positive descriptions or gestures shift freely between vastly different ontological realms. As above with domestication, I briefly explore a few here:

[20] "The Resilience of the Wild: Talking and Stalking Wolves with Rod Coronado," *Black and Green Review*, vol. 1

[21] From Hemenway's "Toward a Horticultural Society" presentation.

[22] He writes, for instance, in the piece "Egocide": "I can't say what it is that I feel [...] I can say that I feel something." and "I'm not talking about some new age 'oneness.'"

Sometimes, wildness seems to refer to a feral, unsocialized state or act: "we fear the wildness we are born into . . . such a savage, primal state."

Though Tucker expresses an allergy to "new age oneness,"[23] he nonetheless also seems to be positing some kind of universalizing force or essential connective substance as when he refers to "that spirit is what connects an individual to the . . . wildness around them." and "wildness that flows between living beings"[24] —at times, it is even composed of divisible units, "pieces of wildness."[25]

And though Tucker agrees with me that "There is no 'Nature,' alone and isolated outside of our grasp," he does not shy away at times from describing wildness as some elusive, essential substance of the world, perhaps independent of any given being as when there is "a war against looming wildness,"[26] one fought against "the state of wildness,"[27] being lost as "there isn't enough wildness left . . . wildness is running thin."[28]

Wildness, then, is anything from a propositional attitude to a quintessence of life that is definitively out there, capable of being tapped into or destroyed. I have had occasion on *Free Radical Radio* to point out that, at his most metaphysically adventurous, Tucker sounds like nothing quite so much as the Classical Stoics, quoted in the epigram, who believed in, among many other things, living well by aligning oneself with Nature. I have noted in those same episodes how Nietzsche so effectively ridiculed this notion:

"You desire to LIVE 'according to Nature'? [which is] boundlessly extravagant, boundlessly indifferent, without purpose or consideration, without pity or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain . . . how COULD you live in accordance with such indifference? . . . Is not living valuing, preferring, being unjust, being limited, endeavouring to be different? . . . In reality, however, it is quite otherwise with you: while you pretend to read with rapture the canon of your law in Nature . . . In your pride you wish to dictate your morals and ideals to Nature, to Nature herself, and to incorporate them therein. . . ."[29]

The idea of living according to some abstracted idea of life, biology, or Nature—be it Stoicism, biocentrism (Tucker's other preferred term), universal love, or wildness—places one in a peculiar ethical paradox. One wants not to be anthropocentric or in line with *The Culture*, opposed as these are to *Nature*, and so one attempts to give oneself over to the way of Life or the Universe. But Life is not actually a coherent, consistent entity that always strives toward the Good, in spite of Tucker's assertion that Nature plays the part of protagonist: though at times its acts are "unpredictable and chaotic," we can count on its consistency as "The only thing they will do for sure is catalyze the life cycles of all living things."[30]

In contrast to Tucker's Platonic portrayal of it, the biosphere is a complex of biota and abiota that are not only often beautiful, rich, stable, and fertile; but also often indifferently destructive and contradictory. Cyanobacteria, the first photosynthetic organisms, may have wiped out most life on Earth 2.3 billion years ago by filling the world with atmospheric oxygen, then toxic to

[23] Tucker, "Egocide," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

[24] Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field."

[25] Tucker, "The Spectacle of the Symbolic," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

[26] Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field."

[27] Tucker, "The Spectacle of the Symbolic."

[28] Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field."

[29] Nietzsche, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," *Beyond Good and Evil*, Penguin Books, 2003. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale.

[30] Tucker, "The Creation of Disaster," *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

most organisms, and went on to create a 300 million year ice age during which even the ocean surface may have been slush. Paleontologist Peter Ward, noting that several similarly apocalyptic events have happened, has put forth the Medea Hypothesis, suggesting that multicellular life is essentially self-destructive and therefore periodically annihilates itself. When philosophers talk about aligning themselves with Nature or Life, they pretend that cyanobacterial nigh-omnicide does not exist; they focus instead on the interconnectedness of trees and mycorrhizal fungi.

The effort to cease being anthropocentric, then, ends up merely recapitulating anthropocentrism by picking and choosing the aspects of the nonhuman world that humans want to emulate. And why should we be afraid of this evaluation, as Nietzsche said, for is the act of living not one of moment-to-moment evaluation? APs, like all Platonists, seem to fear that a lack of objective, transcendental value would entail either a total devaluation of the world or else a complete arbitrariness about what has value—if we do not enshrine Nature, wildness, Life, or *something* as the Good, and especially if we show that Nature et al. sometimes do pointless and destructive things, then, it follows for them, that there would be no good reason we should not just continue to monotonously and immiseratingly denude the biosphere. But this conclusion does not necessarily follow.

The cyanobacterial annihilation of most life was one articulation of life's possibilities, just as the present civilized annihilation of much of the organic is another—as a unique, evaluating being, I am fully prepared to say, unhesitatingly, that I prefer certain assemblages to others. Such an act could be called anthropocentric in its refusal to defer to some imagined, unified will or objective value of biocentrism or Nature; but I would call it simply a unique, entirely perspectival and personal evaluation, as it defers to neither an imagined totality of nature nor to any variation of humanism.

The Persistence of Manichaeism

> *"the primal war: the refusal and resistance to domestication wherever and whenever it has imposed itself on life and the world."*
> - Kevin Tucker
> "Agents of Change: Primal War and the Collapse of Global Civilization"

Both wildness and domestication, then, seem to be vague predicates referring more or less ambiguously to Platonic Forms. Domestication gestures at a certain social and ecological relationship, but suggests that an exertion of power is the primary problem. Wildness refers to some will or essential rightness of Nature. Domestication and wildness, then, refer primarily to moral categories, diametrically opposed, and AP insistence on using them has the function of framing the world as a cosmic battlefield between essentially opposed forces.[31]

In this way, Tucker has not departed categorically from classical anarchists, in that he frames the struggle of anarchism in a Manichaean schema that sees wildness, nature, and humanity in a moral-cosmological struggle with domestication, civilization, and the capitalist state. It is replete

[31] Indeed, John Zerzan has, more than once, on *Anarchy Radio* as well as in personal conversation, expressed contempt for an anti-civilization perspective that does not base itself on a Civilization/Nature dualism, regarding the refusal of such a metaphysic as implicitly capitulatory. In spite of his important recognition in the 1980s (essays collected in *Elements of Refusal*) that one of the driving aspects of civilization is reification, Zerzan demands at least some level of Platonism.

with a Rapture event, the Collapse, that replaces Revolution;[32] and a *ressentiment* aimed at "the domesticators," who are our nouveaux-bourgeoisie.[33] Tucker, in spite of significantly different particulars, is thus in the basic logic of his thinking in alignment with Bakunin, who understood anarchism as the struggle of natural authority against artificial authority, the former not being oppressive because its laws "are not extrinsic in relation to us, they are inherent in us, they constitute our nature, our whole being physically, intellectually, and morally."[34]

We are thus left with a decidedly submissive logic predicated on externalized value, defined both in submission to an abstract Platonic authority, nature or wildness, as well as through *ressentiment* toward the domesticators and civilization; we have the same self-diminution with respect to Good and Evil. This leaves one with the same deference to reification that has characterized all of civilization, precipitated its creation, and crippled the majority of critical theories waged against it.

[32] Though Tucker is circumspect in extolling present action and emphasizing that he does not perceive collapse as a discrete event, he is still prone to endorsing this millenarianism, the ultimate in delayed-return anarchy. The introduction to Black and Green Review, for instance, frames our present context in terms of collapse. Tucker is perhaps unaware of the degree to which some anarcho-primitivists base their entire perspectives, and entire lives, around waiting for this deliverance while learning primitive skills. This practice recapitulates Marxist-Leninist revolutionary discipline, training one's mind and body to be prepared for when the Revolution comes.

[33] This ressentiment-fueled analysis places blame for our situation on a tiny politico-economic elite with nefarious motivations. While I can certainly sympathize with disgust for the behavior of specific persons and attitudes among said elite, I find this kind of unqualified vilification distorts the reality of the social machine that creates a qualitatively and quantitatively different enslavement and imprisonment for each person in civilization as well as mutual co-dependence among us.

[34] Quoted in Newman, Saul, "Anarchism and the Politics of Ressentiment." Thanks to Nicola for pointing this connection out to me.

It's All Falling Apart: Dispatches From the End Times

43 STUDENTS DISAPPEAR

A year later the Mexican State still has no answers.

The families of the missing students have always distrusted the government's account of what happened to their relatives on the night of Sept. 26, 2014. The male students of Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College came under attack several times by Mexican security forces that evening in the nearby city of Iguala, after they tried to commandeer buses for an upcoming protest. By the end of the night, three of them were dead and 43 were missing. The government said the students were abducted by local police, who handed them to be killed by the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel.

But the official account of events is riddled with holes and inconsistencies. The government faced accusations that suspects and witnesses were tortured and that their refusal to investigate the role of federal forces amounted to a cover-up.

Source: Huffington Post

OCEAN FISH NUMBERS ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE

The amount of fish in the oceans has halved since 1970, in a plunge to the "brink of collapse" caused by over-fishing and other threats. "There is a massive, massive decrease in species which are critical", both for the ocean ecosystem and food security for billions of people, he said. "The ocean is resilient but there is a limit."

The report said populations of fish, marine mammals, birds, and reptiles had fallen 49 per cent between 1970 and 2012. For fish alone, the decline was 50 per cent.

Source: WWF International

SYRIAN CONFLICT AND MIGRANT CRISES ACTUALLY DUE TO COMPETING OIL INTERESTS

The timing of the Syrian conflict is peculiar: The meddling in Syria came about immediately on the heels of discussions of an Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline that was to be built between 2014 and 2016 from Iran's giant South Pars field through Iraq and Syria. With a possible extension to Lebanon, it would eventually reach Europe, the target export market.

Perhaps the most accurate description of the current crisis over gas, oil, and pipelines that is raging in Syriahas was described by Dmitry Minin, writing for the Strategic Cultural Foundation in May 2013: "A battle is raging over whether pipelines will go toward Europe from east to west, from Iran and Iraq to the Mediterranean coast of Syria, or take a more northbound route from Qatar and Saudi Arabia via Syria and Turkey. Having realized that the stalled Nabucco pipeline, and indeed the entire Southern Corridor, are backed up only by Azerbaijan's reserves and can never equal Russian supplies to Europe or thwart the construction of the South Stream, the West is in a hurry to replace them with resources from the Persian Gulf. Syria ends up being a key link in this chain, and it leans in favor of Iran and Russia; thus it was decided in the Western capitals that its regime needs to change."

Source: MintPress News

IF THE FISH WEREN'T ENOUGH, THE TREES ARE DYING OFF ALSO

Those are the findings of researchers who on Wednesday unveiled the most comprehensive assessment of global tree populations ever conducted, using data including satellite imagery and groundbased tree density estimates from more than 400,000 locations worldwide.

The estimate of 3.04 trillion trees—an estimated 422 for every person—is about eight times higher than a previous estimate of 400 billion trees that was based on satellite imagery but less data from the ground.

The new findings leave abundant reason for concern—with people at the root of the problem.

The number of trees has fallen by about 46 percent since the start of human civilization and each year there is a gross loss of 15 billion trees and a net loss of 10 billion, said Yale University ecologist Thomas Crowther, who led the study published in the journal *Nature*.

"There are currently fewer trees than at any point since the start of human civilization and this number is still falling at an alarming rate," he said. "If anything, the scale of these numbers just highlights the need to step up our efforts if we are going to begin to repair some of these effects on a global scale."

Source: Reuters

THE WEST COAST WAS ON FIRE ALL SUMMER AND NO ONE CARED

This year, there were wildfires.

Not the typical wildfires, mind you. Not the normal smattering of (relatively) easily controlled seasonal blazes that nature herself always ignites to help purge and clear; I mean all the massive, drought-amplified, state-engulfing wildfires you've been hearing about all season long—nearly all of them larger, earlier, and more frequent than any time in modern history, ranging from a few thousand acres to the largest in the country, the Soda fire, currently engulfing upwards of 265,000 acres in southern Idaho, which joins with all the other Pacific Northwest fires burning throughout Washington, Oregon and Montana. And here you thought just California was ablaze.

Do you know about Alaska? Nearly five million acres have burned throughout that unusually hot, dry state this year, which is a record, which is something like the size of Connecticut (combined), which is more staggering than your heart can process. Go ahead, try it. And then add in Canada's staggering wildfires, and you hit upwards of 11 million scorched acres – that's 17,000 square miles, and still going strong. That's terrifying.

The scariest part? Fire season, historically speaking, doesn't even begin until September. Did you know 2015 is already officially the hottest year ever recorded on Earth? Did you know Alaska recorded its hottest month ever, in 91 years of record keeping, in May? Or that Washington's biggest fire could keep burning until it snows? The worst—as nearly every scientist, climatologist, environmentalist in the world is all too sick of saying these days—is yet to come.

Source: SF Gate

THERE IS NO FIX TO THE DAMAGE HUMANS HAVE DONE TO THE OCEAN

A new study finds there is no "deus ex machina" way to prevent a catastrophic collapse of ocean life for centuries if not millennia—if we don't start slashing carbon pollution ASAP.

The panel warned of the huge risks with the more invasive strategies to reduce the amount of sunlight absorbed by the Earth: "There is significant potential for unanticipated, unmanageable, and regrettable consequences in multiple human dimensions from albedo modification at climate altering scales, including political, social, legal, economic, and ethical dimensions."

Source: thinkprogress.org

URANIUM MINING AT THE GRAND CANYON

In June, the Grand Canyon was named one of the "Most Endangered Places" in America by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. But the designation came just two months too late to possibly influence US District Court Judge David Campbell. In April, he denied a request by the Havasupai tribe and a coalition of conservation groups to halt new uranium mining next to Grand Canyon National Park, just six miles from the Grand Canyon's South Rim.

This uranium project could haunt the Grand Canyon region for decades to come," said Katie Davis with the Center for Biological Diversity. "Uranium mining leaves a highly toxic legacy that endangers human health, wildlife, and the streams and aquifers that feed the Grand Canyon. It's disappointing to see the Forest Service prioritizing the extraction industry over the long-term protection of a place as iconic as the Grand Canyon."

Source: EF! Newswire

CHINESE AIR POLLUTION MAY BE KILLING AS MANY AS 4,000 PEOPLE A DAY

A study out just now from Berkeley Earth in California, written by Robert Rohde and Richard Muller, deserves attention. It concludes that air pollution in China, familiar to everyone, in fact does more damage than is generally recognized. The study finds that as a result of this pollution, some 1.6 million Chinese people per year, or more dramatically well over 4,000 per day, are dying prematurely.

Source: The Atlantic

THE EPA TRIGGERED A MULTI-MILLION GALLON SPILL OF MINE WASTE WATER

Southwestern Colorado has a lot of abandoned mines and environmental officials have been in the area for years, working to clear toxic metals and acidic water left behind.

At the Gold King Mine, EPA officials were using heavy equipment for their site investigation to learn the extent of contamination. Not only was there was more mine wastewater than expected, but the water was held back by a dam of soils as opposed to rocks. While the EPA was digging around, water gushed out and started to drain down.

"We typically respond to emergencies, we don't cause them. But this is just something that happens when we're dealing with mines sometimes," said Dave Ostrander, EPA Region 8 Director of Emergency Preparedness.

Source: Colorado Public Radio

NEAR-COMPLETE MELTDOWN CONFIRMED AT REACTOR 2 IN FUKUSHIMA

RT: How dangerous is the area right now?

KK: Unfortunately we don't have much information yet after these record breaking floods just last week, which in a very big way has moved radioactivity to new places in the environment, or has re-contaminated places previously decontaminated supposedly. So there is so much that we don't know. Certainly there have to be very careful steps taken to measure the radioactivity in the environment. Any pronouncements by local mayors or even the Japanese government that they are only detecting so much radioactivity one meter above the ground—it misses the point in a very big way. Radioactive cesium, strontium, tritium, and other radioactive poisons can enter the food supply, and people can eat the radioactivity or drink it in their drinking water. Very careful measures to guard against the contamination of the food supply and the drinking water supply have to be taken. And I don't know if that is happening in all places right now.

Source: Russia Today

DROUGHT IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF OUR FRIGHTENING WATER EMERGENCY

The United Nations reports that we have 15 years to avert a full-blown water crisis and that, by 2030, demand for water will outstrip supply by 40 percent. But the global water crisis is just that—global—in every sense of the word. A deadly combination of growing inequality, climate change, rising water prices, and mismanagement of water sources in the North has suddenly put the world on a more even footing.

Climate change is another equalizing phenomenon. Melting glaciers, warming watersheds, and chaotic weather patterns are upsetting the water cycle everywhere. Higher temperatures increase the amount of moisture that evaporates from land and water; a warmer atmosphere then releases more precipitation in areas already prone to flooding and less in areas prone to drought. Indeed, drought is intensifying in many parts of the world, and deserts are growing in more than 100 countries.

Source: Alternet

EASTERN PUMA DECLARED EXTINCT, REMOVED FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

The US Fish and Wildlife Service today declared the eastern puma extinct and removed it from the list of protected wildlife and plants under the Endangered Species Act. The eastern puma was a subspecies of the animal also known as cougar or mountain lion, which is still widely distributed across the West. It once roamed as far north as southeastern Ontario, southern Quebec and New Brunswick in Canada, south to South Carolina and west to Kentucky, Illinois and Michigan.

"Through public and civic tolerance and through reintroduction at the state level, pumas could be returned to the East to play their ancient role in controlling deer herds," said Robinson. "This is a somber moment to think about what the land under our feet used to be like, and what roamed here. It should also be a clarion call to recover pumas and all of our apex predators to sustainable levels to help rebalance a world that is out of kilter."

Source: Planet Experts

500 INJURED AT TAWAINESE WATER PARK

Firefighters said the firestorm erupted around 8:30 p.m. Saturday (8:30 a.m. ET), when a flammable powder substance blew up over a stage at Formosa Fun Coast, according to a CNA report.

Video showed a massive fireball suddenly engulfing the stage, followed by screaming people running for their lives through flames.

Source: CNN

US POLICE ON TRACK TO KILL 1,600 PEOPLE IN 2015

Looking at the data for the US against admittedly less reliable information on police killings elsewhere paints a dramatic portrait, and one that resonates with protests that have gone global since a killing last year in Ferguson, Missouri: the US is not just some outlier in terms of police violence when compared with countries of similar economic and political standing.

Source: The UK Guardian

CLIMATE CHANGE IS ACTUALLY HELPING WHALE HUNTERS

Meanwhile, the prospect of increased commercial fishing in the region threatens to reduce the amount of food for the massive mammals. And as warming driven by fossil fuel consumption makes the Arctic more accessible, it's made the estimated reserves of oil and gas in the region more accessible.

All of those pose threats to whales, which also can die when snagged in fishing gear, hit by ships' propellers, or fouled by an oil spill. Ewins said humans need to come up with "a smarter

and better-balanced" approach to the Arctic before pouring into the North the way they have swarmed other frontiers.

"Most sentient people agree that humans appear to be crashing along and are about to set up the same mistakes… Whale populations will need to be monitored and managed long-term for both those species and the indigenous Arctic populations that still depend on them for subsistence," he said.

"Unfortunately, at the regional and local level, resource-hungry nations right now are prioritizing GDP as the basis, maximizing economic growth," Ewins said.

Source: Vice News

BEIJING CONTROLS THE WEATHER, FOR PHOTO OPS!

Less than 24 hours after the end of China's massive military parade, Beijing is back to its usual smoggy self.

Residents woke up Friday morning to find the crystal blue skies that graced the city nearly two weeks suddenly gone—in their place, the familiar sight and smell of dour gray pollution clouds. Starting late August, Beijing enjoyed a rare string of continuously clear days as authorities took drastic action to ensure an azure backdrop for the largest parade it's ever held—a showcase marking the 70th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II.

Hundreds of factories were shut during this time, while half of Beijing's five million registered cars were banned from the streets.

Source: CNN

Prisoner Updates

In each issue, we include news and addresses of prisoners in hopes that readers will choose a few to write. Sometimes, what is going on behind prison walls feels foreign to those of us on the outside. However, when we are in correspondence with prisoners, we strengthen those bonds between the inside and the outside.

REBECCA RUBIN

In the late 1990s, Rubin is alleged to have participated in a spree of arsons that caused upwards of $55 million in damages as part of the Animal Liberation Front and Earth Liberation Front. She is among the targets of the FBI's "Operation Backfire." She is currently serving five years.

Rebecca Rubin
#98290-011
FCI Dublin
5701 8Th St – Camp Parks
Dublin, California 94568

JUSTIN SOLONDZ

Another target of Operation Backfire, Justin Solondz was indicted for multiple counts of arson, conspiracy and use of an "unregistered destructive device" in 2006 for his alleged participation in an arson at the University of Washington and an arson at the Litchfield Wild Horse and Burro Corral in Susanville, CA.

On December 20, 2011, he plead guilty to a single count of conspiracy and a single count of arson for the arson at UW. He was sentenced to five years in prison.

Justin Solondz
#98291-011
FCI Oakdale I
Post Office Box 5000
Oakdale, Louisiana 71463

CASEY BREZIK

Casey Brezik is an anarchist from Kansas City area who is charged with slashing the throat of the Dean of Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley in an alleged plot to attack the Governor of Missouri, Jay Nixon, during a talk at the college. In 2013, he was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Casey Brezik
#1154765
Northeast Correctional Center
13698 Airport Road
Bowling Green, MO 63334

BILL DUNNE

Bill Dunne is an anti-authoritarian prisoner sentenced to 90 years for the attempted liberation of an anarchist prisoner. Bill was arrested in 1979 when he and Larry Giddings attempted to

free fellow revolutionary Artie Ray Dufur. The two were arrested after an exchange of fire with police as they were fleeing the scene. Bill and Larry were charged with auto theft and aiding and abetting the escape, for which Bill received an 80 year federal prison sentence. In 1983 Bill attempted to escape prison and was given another 15 years in prison.

Bill Dunne
#10916-086
USP Lompoc
US Penitentiary
3901 Klein Blvd
Lompoc, CA 93436

MARIUS MASON

Marius Mason is an anarchist, labor organizer, and eco-warrior serving nearly 22 years in prison for carrying out acts of property destruction, including an arson at a Michigan State University genetics laboratory and an arson of logging equipment in Mesick, Michigan. He was sold out by his former partner, Frank Ambrose, who became an FBI informant.

In 2014, Marius came out as transgender and is currently fighting for a name change, hormones, and surgery. In a recent update from his support website, it was stated that he has received almost no mail in the last few weeks.

Marie (Marius) Mason
#04672-061
FMC Carswell
P.O. Box 27137
Fort Worth, Texas 76127
Note: address envelope to "Marie (Marius) Mason", and the letter to "Marius."

JAY CHASE

Brent Betterly, Jay Chase, and Brian Church were arrested just before the NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012 and charged with "possession of an incendiary or explosive device, conspiracy to commit terrorism, and providing material support for terrorism." Set up by a police informant, they were sentenced to prison for making molotovs and saying that they planned to use them to attack police stations, a Democratic Party campaign office, and the mayor's home during the NATO summit. Brian Jacob Church was sentenced to five years, Brent Betterly to six years, and Jay Chase to eight years. Brian Jacob Church was released in late 2014, Brent Betterly was released in April 2015.

Jared (Jay) Chase

Pontiac Correctional Center
PO Box 99
Pontiac, Illinois 61764
Note: address envelope to "Jared (Jay) Chase", letter to "Jay".

THE CLEVELAND FOUR

The Cleveland 4 are four Occupy Cleveland activists arrested in 2012 after being coerced into plotting a series of bombings by an FBI informant.

Connor, Doug, and Brandon took non-cooperating plea deals. Doug is serving 11.5 years, Brandon 9 years 9 months, and Connor 8 years 1 month. The judge applied a terrorist enhancement,

resulting in longer sentences and harsher prison conditions. Skelly took his case to trial, refusing a plea deal. He was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years.

Brandon Baxter
#57972-060
USP Atwater
P.O. Box 019001
Atwater, CA 95301

Connor Stevens
#57978-060
FCI McKean
PO Box 8000
Bradford, Pennsylvania 16701

Doug Wright
#57978-060
Currently in transit
Check cleveland4solidarity.org for more info

Joshua Stafford
#57976-060
USP Tucson
P.O. BOX 24550
Tucson, Arizona 85734

ERIC KING

Eric is a vegan anarchist awaiting trial for an alleged firebombing of a Congressman's office in Kansas City, Missouri.

Eric King
#27090045
CCA Leavenworth
100 Highway Terrace
Leavenworth, Kansas 66048

MICHAEL KIMBLE

Michael Kimble is a black, gay anarchist held captive by the State of Alabama since 1986 for the murder of a white, racist homophobe, for which he received a life sentence. After moving away from communism, Michael turned toward anarchism and continues to struggle as an anarchist against his conditions. Michael has a long history of uncompromising struggle against prison and its world.

Michael Kimble
#138017
3700 Holman Unit
Atmore, Alabama 36503

"There's No Place to Go" — An Interview With Dominique

ARAGORN!: I'm sitting here talking to Dominique. I could introduce him in a variety of ways but I want to start out by asking him how he would describe himself and why he thinks he's of interest in the context of the series of interviews I've been having in *Black Seed*.

DOMINIQUE: Well I think that I'm in a position in the middle in some ways. Usually people are coming strongly from one side or the other, either as an anarchist or a Native American. Within the tension between post left and identitarian positions, I'm like an illegitimate child. I'm someone who stays aware of what comes out of native theory but I'm also interested in reading anarchist writers. So as far as identities go, I would present myself as a reader with bruises, that would be my role for today.

A!: It is funny because when you set up an interview, obviously a lot of my goal in these interviews is to present a long-form version of a talk with a native person who the general reader will probably never have this talk with, and I guess the goal was to say rather than infantilize/celebrate Natives just because they exist, just talking to them in a series of talking points ("I'm an activist who's done prison work in minnesota, and I've had these successes…"), my idea was always to take Native people who have an interest in anti-authoritarian politics broadly and contextualize them. In this way you're an interesting person to talk to because the previous two people I interviewed for *Black Seed* have activist pedigrees. And that hasn't been your schtick.

D: I guess I could say who my family is, how I grew up, with connections to Native radicalism, or talk about being a prison convict, even though I wasn't a political prisoner, but I think a lot of times in anti-authoritarian circles, that's considered an *authentic* identity. But I'm not really concerned with presenting authenticity. I would *like* to think that I'm not an activist but I have been involved in doing things with other anarchists for a long time, for better or worse.

A!: But that's you responding to activist as a swear word in anarchist circles or the…

D: The term has some negative connotations. Activism as the obligation to sacrifice yourself for the cause, to stay busy until judgment comes, that doesn't work for me, but I still exist in a world where actions occur.

A!: …opposite of a swear word. In other words it's almost a meaningless signifier.

D: With the idea of reading in the context of green anarchist perspectives, I would agree with a lot of critiques of anthropology and say that it's a lot more stimulating to me to directly talk to Native people, as opposed to through a second source, but that you can also look at indigeneity through literature, and that's maybe a more respectful way to go about it.

A!: How do you think about quote unquote literature in the context of the famous Russell Means essay about spoken word vs written word?*

D: Looking into these issues, I've found that there's more questions than answers. For someone totally immersed in our American environment it's hard to say we are oral, and to argue that in academic papers in English; it's hard. I agree that a text is a sort of static conversation that

happens in this alienated way, but I still think that literature is not an alien thing for natives at this point.

A!: When I think about my own life… I experienced life entirely as an oral culture until I was six or seven. I can say pretty strongly that my mother was an incredible bookworm, she loved to read, but she was also my gateway to Native America. So most of social life was around the kitchen table until I was old enough to read and then I went into a room alone and read, but then it was richer when I came back to the table… I guess my tentative argument is that the slices of our life could have these different moments.

D: I think that's what is interesting about Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor; he's trying to put the oral culture into literature. He's trying to write in a way that is inspired by story telling. Me trying to describe him or write like that, I can't do that. But this points to how important oral traditions are to the Three Fires peoples.But I guess, also, I mean to talk about my story… I think I'm similar to you in a way in regards to my family. Like my dad was a Native radical in the Twin Cities at the height of when that was something people were talking about…

A!: When America actually cared…

D: It was a time when people conspicuously cared about these issues. My mom is a non-Indian who is still involved with Native solidarity work so it's… it's a personal thing. I grew up on military bases, so it was kind of like I didn't know I was Native until later. I mean, I got the "you're Native," but I didn't understand what that meant. After going and meeting older relatives, going to the reservation, it was kind of like a therapeutic ritual. So what gets transmitted… is the stories. The stories that people tell you is, I guess, the link where it's not merely genetic, you know? It's not an abstraction, it's the actual people in stories… that's what I got. So it's important to me…

A!: So… it wasn't stories about some mythological figure, it was the stories about the lives of actual people around you that were mythological? Like, larger than life…

D: I'm just trying to make a point about what's left of an unbroken culture, which is already sort of a paradox. Genocide affected more than just material conditions but there are still pieces of story and ceremony. Like you hear about Nanabush and the fact that storytelling still happens… so it leads me to question materialism in a different way and wonder what it means to accept atheism. I connect the stories with people and personalities. Post-left anarchists and indigenous radicals find it hard to talk to each other. I don't consider Ojibwa to be an abstraction. When Stirner talks about Ludwig not being a generic Ludwig when you're speaking of a person; that's something I keep in mind when I talk about Anishinabe—it's not just the idea of an Indian, it's a real people who I've seen in uniqueness…

A!: That's interesting… Just to go back to something that you said before we were recording that I was really interested in – you said you were not political. What does that mean? (Like, you're using a lot of political terms…)

D: Part of what I'm saying is that I'm not interested in mass movements… I don't think that the idea of an american indian movement makes sense for me or by extension APOC politics… I think that politics could be something you use in a small group, direct relationships, I believe all of our language is politicized, and that's related to a criticism of Native radicals— that comes from a Native perspective. These radicals in camo don't automatically represent traditions (I would say) and they're speaking for elders as if the elders can't talk themselves. This can also apply to Tribal Councils. That is one part of the story of why I would reject politics. Vizenor's critique of communism has more to do with the communists he encounters than with historical

materialism. The radicals he sees selling papers in Minneapolis would never laugh because their struggle was so grave. If I have to give up laughter for politics, I choose laughter.

A!: That's a great point. So last winter we threw what I'll call a local book fair, distinct from the national-scope bookfair that is also held in the area called the Bay Area/San Francisco Anarchist Bookfair. We throw what we call the East Bay Anarchist Book and Conversation Event (we shortened that to EBAB), and it happens roughly in November. It's a twopart event, one part traditional tabling for anarchist projects and publications, and the second part sort of an intentional set of conversations obviously about the books that are interesting but also about theory, anarchist ideas, what does it mean and why is it relevant to be an anarchist in this century. This year the theme was decolonization, and you did a presentation. Can you talk a bit about that and start out with the name, which I think for many people was very provocative.

D: My presentation was called "Native Simulations, Cross Bloods, and Pre-Left Anarchy." I'll start with pre-left anarchy, which was a response to post-left anarchism. It examines a tendency in Native radicalism or decolonization (when those overlap) to say that the pre-contact new world was egalitarian and didn't have this whole list of things, patriarchy, capitalism, etc… I'm concerned when people call for a non-western anarchism. I think it's interesting the way the post-left posits that there's a relationship to the Left that we've gone past. Unfortunately, I think Native Americans are still expected to share interests with the Left.

A!: we've definitely been a victim of the Left for…

D: Right. A lot of these critiques of anthropology could come out of native experiences, a lot of criticism comes from there. I don't know that there was pre-left anarchism that you could easily line up to categories that we use today. But there were possibilities that pointed towards anarchy. You can't generalize about Native Americans but there's enough evidence for me to believe that there were different ways of living, that societies were distinct in their values, expressions, and economies, and I like the idea of openness instead of trying to put our categories in other peoples, places, or times.

A!: So let's unpack that a little. You say you're uncomfortable or you don't like the idea of non-western anarchisms. What are you referring to, what does that mean? ie are you referring specifically to the pamphlet called "Non Western Anarchisms," written by Jason Adams in the late 90s?

D: The non-western anarchist pamphlet I think was mostly big-A anarchism in non-western places, but not necessarily a non-western worldview that is also anti-authoritarian. I'm responding partially to people who say things like "anarchism is white," that it is "of no use for supposedly marginal people." Anarchism *has* been a mostly European phenomenon…

A!: By the word…

D: Perhaps we should turn to Marxism? But, seriously I think there was probably plenty of anarchy on turtle island. There's anarchistic aspects to Nanabush who is (I would say) not a generic trickster from a primordial folklore, but a specific way to tell stories or a certain spirit. That's what I draw on.

A!: The other thing I was going to ask you about was what you mean by a utopian pre-contact world vs the world we live in now. This has a lot of impact because part of what people mean when they speak about the Left is something like a utopian future (that's equality, liberty, and fraternity since the Left comes out of the French Revolution). So that's what they seem to be referencing: "they came to this land and these things existed and then we fucked them up."

D: When you're talking about decolonization, the problem is: where do you draw the line? What tools are you going to use to decide what things were like before, or who we were before as Ojibwa people? You have to use experts like ethnologists for information. Christian missionaries for indigenous hymn and bible translations. Looking backwards can be problematic for the colonized. Political optimists use the child to represent the future. Natives are often times expected to look back on a lost utopia. We're supposed to already be dead. That's sort of my reaction to some primitive yearnings, that seem to say, "Here's the point that we need to rewind to." I think the drawbacks may be close to those of other utopias.

A!: I heard a disturbing story from one of my elders recently. They basically said that the Ottawa (related to Ojibwa but not quite) had a pretty fixed notion of the great spirit, that was basically an origin story of a Great Spirit that created but was indifferent. But the Great Spirit was always referred to, so when the Catholics came, it was a seamless transition. This obviously makes me very uncomfortable because it means that my people were okay with the Christians when they came! Because the world views just weren't that different. And whoever came, the Jesuits or whoever, did a pretty good job of "all ya gotta do is change the name!"

D: Yea, I always like to listen to elders but I've never been very good at hearing what they tell me.

A!: [laughs]

D: But I've heard traditional people say that the pipe and the cross are same thing.

A!: Ooo fuuuuck.

D: That the smoke brings our prayers up to the Great Spirit… I don't think they're the same thing. But if our pre-contact ancestors were interchangeable with the monotheists we would have to rebel against them too.

A!: For me the point is that Native America is not one thing. Different tribes have different ways in which they wore these values, so for me the disturbing part of the story is that my people, who as it turned out at some point in the geopolitical story were given this choice of "convert or walk to Oklahoma," were really okay with the conversion (very few Ottawa from Michigan walked to Oklahoma) because mostly they were okay with… in other words the way they wore their version of the Great Spirit ended up being—in their own minds—okay with Catholics. And for me, someone who wants to believe that my predecessors were ready to fuck shit up… they really weren't.

D: For sure. This is related to where you draw the line in the situation that we're in presently. I would like to consider Christianity as something that I know doesn't work for me as a tool. The idea that natives lived a natural, edenic existence that got fucked up but there is a way we could get back there, sounds pretty Christian but of course my rez is Catholic, and I don't know if the world views match up necessarily, but colonization wasn't always one-sided, and that's part of the dilemma… that there was an exchange. And how can we leave our ancestors with agency, if you want to call it that? They were humans who were reacting, and that's sort of how I approach anarchism, because it's mostly a non-Native thing, but I like to think that I can use it and not become a European.

A!: Ok. So then, I guess that an appropriate question that I'm supposed to ask you is what does decolonization mean to you, but I find that difficult because it seems like a robot question. I don't even personally know what decolonization means for myself so I wouldn't ask the question but…

D: When people ask me that question my answer is "a lot of burning." That is the only thing that makes sense to me if you want to use that as a metaphor. In *The Witch of Going Snake* it says "Throw away your guns and your steel knives and pots. Kill your cats. Destroy everything you have that came from the white man." I don't know where to begin to make that separation. I don't know what is colonized inside of myself. It all seems pretty damaged. Maybe that is what is radical. I can say to natives in the city, "you can't go home and find the answer there." Just like, me leaving rural areas and coming to the city didn't change everything; there's no place to go.

A!: Meaning you weren't innocent in the country and spoiled by the city.

D: We can't always look to what A.I.M did, or to our great ancestors, or wait for the future for answers, that's part of what I'm saying, not to look for something else besides what is here, and what is here sucks, so that's the position I'm in.

A!: There was also something in your presentation about Andrea Smith, who has been in the middle of some controversy recently…

D: I talked about her piece called "Indigenous Feminism without Apology," which makes the case that pre-contact societies were matriarchal and basically anarchistic. I want to see anarchist ideas reflected throughout societies, but I'm not sure that it's always true. The fact that Andrea Smith has been outed as a Native imposter is not surprising. Apparently there were rumors for a while that she was faking Indian. It's difficult because proving that you are an Indian involves official papers and government bureaucracies. No one really asks if someone is a "real" white person. But, the Smiths and Dolezals are at home in the world of simulations. Vizenor says that if Natives are gonna live, then the Indian as a sign has to die.

A!: Oh, that's interesting. He means Indian as in tear in the eye of the crying stoic…

D: The savage, the vanishing tragedy. The natural ecologist.

A!: Right.

D: The post-Indian approach centers specific tribal groups or bands, as opposed to using Native American as a catch-all, because while the Ojibwa existed; there's never been an Indian except in people's imaginations. This means stepping away from victimization and recognition as a way to frame what it means to be Native. The idea that we all died or that we're sad and defeated isn't true and it isn't helpful for those of us who are still around. Talking about Vizenor for me includes a statement against the brown paper bag test [the idea that if one is not darker than a brown paper bag then one may as well be white] because he is very phenotypically white. I could talk about indigeneity without referencing light complexions or dark skin at all, and I guess mine is somewhere in between. There is more to the story than just pigmentation. Sure Natives have a phenotype, there is a blood memory, but Nanabush doesn't have DNA.

A!: Can you talk about Nanabush?

D: Nanabush is an important Ojibwa character in story telling, usually credited with creating the world, but sometimes seen as a prankster. I would say to people reading this, don't go read a book that's like, "Folklore from All Around the World." Because it's not really about that. Nanabush is something that's indescribable and dangerous. They are someone playful who breaks taboos, they wouldn't fit in with a Christian society, he's not civilized. In *Baedan*, they say they want to become feral—they're talking about wanting to approach life wildly. I can relate to that. I think that these queer nihilist identities have something in common with the person of undetermined race…

A!: Of course.

D: ...since we can't fit in, in either place. so we're in this strange position, but maybe that's not a bad thing.

A!: There's a thousand things to talk about in that little bit you just said, not the least of which is how unacceptable it is to break taboos; in other words we're talking about a whole set of people who are proclaiming their liminal status (as anarchists) but no one will break a taboo. One of the ways I experience it is around moralism... To bring up a really stupid (and old) example: Bob Black calling the cops. The idea that this event is such a fetish object 20 years after it happened—many people, any time they see a Bob Black post or anything about him, will repost the shitty thing he did 20 years ago. This is the opposite of celebrating or even appreciating taboo, it's indicative of a policing culture. It feels almost puritanical, like we should be wearing corsets and shouting "shame" at people (which I do sometimes in play, only because it's hysterical that people think it means anything). It's just strange to me that there's all this theory that says one thing, but all this practice that says you cannot do that thing.

D: You could frame Nanabush as a sinner according to Christian values. He would get called out in the anarchist subculture. He (or sometimes she) has an tendency to shape-shift. I like crossing lines as a liminal person, not that it's a dialectic, but I don't believe that there's a static identity. Earth First! the way it used to be, or seemed to be, with rednecks and radical environmentalists going out and fucking shit up, to me is awesome, better than reaching consensus.

A!: Black Seed folks went to the EF! gathering in 2014. This year in 2015 the details are unclear given the report backs, but it appears that a POC faction denounced the gathering from within, and as a group left the gathering. That was the 2015 controversy. I know. Very surprising.

D: I would quote Bob Black and say nobody intervenes more to mind other people's business than separatists. Like radical feminists, who have this affinity and want to live by themselves. I can see why that makes sense, and they should do that. The idea of people choosing who they want to work with, that totally makes sense to me. For me personally it means it's hard to be a nationalist. I can't find people exactly like me, so I'm not interested in agreeing on every point before I work on something with someone. A!: I guess I'm the closest person to you around...

D: I can relate to you because we share a certain double burden of concerns... I could go back around now and say how I got here. Being a prisoner and being poor, that's not what makes a Native, but it was part of my experience, There were a lot of Native prisoners in the prison where I was.

A!: Because it was in...

D: South Dakota. They automatically put you in a cell with someone of your own race. It's rigidly segregated . And that's part of why I felt an uneasiness about Oakland scene politics, because I had already had to live in a violent racialist environment. While I was in prison I recieved free copies of *Green Anarchy* magazine and read a lot of other radical texts. At the same time, I was also confronted by racist nationalists of different stripes. It was all sort of coming at me, so it made sense to view the ideologies as stories. When coming to the Bay Area... that's another thing that's important for what I'm talking about is that I talked to actual anarchists in person. This is me doing the anthropological fieldwork with existing anarchists, and it's important because it made me see the ideas differently, what the scope is, different from being in prison, reading essays. It's a different terrain. For example labels such as a snitch, pedophile, white supremacist etc. are used less frequently and carry a different weight in prison than when used by some anarchists.

A!: One of the things that's really different is an urban setting, especially a big city, in something like what we could call the APOC scene. Almost no one talks about their childhood, because if they did the coherence of their political position today, and the difficulty of reconciling that with an actual life story, would all fall apart. Let's go on talking about your presentation. Say more about liminal identities and Vizenor in general. He's written dozens of books?

D: Almost 50. You could situate him as writing speculative fiction. He sometimes gets put on the science fiction shelf or in the slipstream genre. He has written short stories, novels, poetry, and non-fiction. He gets lumped in with postmodernism. I think it's because it's hard to frame what he's writing about.

A!: How would you compare him to Sherman Alexie, another well known Native story teller, with fantastical elements?

D: "Magical realism" is usually how people refer to writers like Sherman Alexie , but I would say that Vizenor is different because he's interacting with continental philosophy, if not always directly.

A!: Less sex?

D: More sex than you might expect. Taboo themes are often featured in Native fiction. In a strange way it is sexy. Native people aren't necessarily puritanical. So in these stories by Vizenor and others like N. Scott Momaday there is transgression, wastefulness, incest, people having sex with two dogs or a bear, and it's in the frame of Native storytelling, and it's not speculating like "i can imagine a world where you could hump a dog;" it's more like, "what if the line between human and animal isn't a real thing?" Definitely there is sex and it's great, and I guess people could think of Vizenor as sort of like Samuel Delany? But maybe a little harder to analyze.

A!: How many of his books are books of essays?

D: That is a lot of what he writes. He started off in Eastern Studies, studying haikus, and I believe he spent some time in Japan. I just think he's a strange character, and the idea that he'd be into Japanese things makes as much sense as anything one would do in university. Ojibwa dream songs have a similar structure to haikus and may have developed earlier. He explicitly talks about his ideas outside of fiction and I enjoy that too. He has several collections of essays some of them touching on Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, and Albert Camus…

A!: Does he have a similar story of one Native parent, one white parent?

D: Yes a similar story. He was raised by his Grandmother on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota. We're related because we're both related to Nanabush, coincidentally. He also taught at UCBerkeley.

A!: Is he retired now?

D: He is a professor emeritus at Berkeley; but that's the thing… I'm not a philosopher and I don't think that ethnic studies is a position of strength. But just like people use anthropology as an anarchist practice, I enjoy reading. Other fictions like the works of the Dark Mountain project are great too. They share stories that don't spoil the ending.

A!: …So, liminal identity.

D: For me I can say I'm half Native and half white, but I don't always want to do that because I don't think it's too symmetrical, and there are automatically issues at least for my tribe where it gets into conversations about blood quantum and genetics and I'm not interested in that. Also I'm enrolled in a federally-recognized tribe but I don't think that is the way to tell who is Native or not. Either through the government or through hereditary science. None of that really matters.

A!: Just a side bar, I have a Canadian Ottawa grandfather.

D: Oh shit.

A!: It doesn't count.

D: Yea. [laughs] Vizenor uses the term cross bloods for mixed-race Indians. it means that you're part of two worlds and don't really walk in either one of them. The scruffy rez dog mongrel comes to mind. There are some Native science fiction writers who talk about Metis identity, and frame it as "we're have Louis Riel as our messiah figure, and mixed blood people are feral and wild." I don't know if I necessarily live up to that…

A!: It would be nice…

D: Sure. Liminality means that things don't have to be this or that, I guess. But it's not necessarily a synthesis either. The two sides might not ever be reconciled. It opens a space for questioning the value of identity altogether.

A!: What's nice about it is that liminal evokes a twilight area where things are indistinguishable from each other, and could be a whole bunch of things.

D: I was recently reading an HP Lovecraft story called "the Mound" that is basically about a haunted Indian burial ground.

A!: I'm sure HP dealt with this with total sensitivity…

D: Of course… The narrator is an ethnologist studying people in Oklahoma. I guess when we talk about queerness, it's like it can mean you don't want to reproduce, you can't get married, you're not a normal part of society, so you're in the shadows. and I like that idea—you could apply it to liminal people. But in the Lovecraft story, it's one of the only times that he vividly describes the Cthulhuian underworld, and he could be describing modern American cities. I mean everything is covered in slime, or whatever, but to the point of Lovecraft looking in shadows, and looking at ambiguity as something that's a complete terror. So I'm thinking about shadows not being horrifying, but also that being horrified is not necessarily something to avoid.

A!: To go back, we sort of touched on her for a second and then I distracted us with the controversy. In Andrea Smith's work you got some points that were worth talking through? So what were those points, and how does that change now that we know that her "quantum doesn't correspond to her points."

D: Yea. Well it seemed like she was trying to do something similar to your explorations into indigenous anarchism, in trying to de-center Europe, and looking at ways that traditional societies were more anarchistic and especially in Latin America, groups that are saying "we are for anarchy and it has to do with our traditions." I think that's worth talking about. I don't know what to say about her non-existent blood quantum. I want to say that it doesn't really matter; but I think it does matter in a way. The question is do Indians think differently? Academic writing can be so abstract that the words are interchangeable. The identity doesn't matter because there's too much distance. If you can switch "indigenous" with "queer," "disabled," or "woman"… cut and paste, and it would be saying basically the same thing. I think that is a problem.

A!: This corresponds with your general point which is that specificity matters. In other words we don't need a new Native American movement, we need a new Minnesota Ojibwa movement.

D: I'm not sure how to respond to that, because I'm not really even concerned with…

A!: …the politics of it.

D: Things are going on now that are political, and it's not really interesting to me but, a lot of Minnesota tribes are changing from blood quantum to descendency. Currently there is a percentage of blood required to become a tribal member, and they want to change it so that you can enroll if you have a distant ancestor. It has to do with resources really. You could make

a connection between tribal organizations' preoccupation with funding and the relationship of Native radicals to white activists; there's already an imbalance but people need the help. Native solidarity activists are always going to talk about how much they hate the allies, but they are always going to invite them to come back. Self determination in the case of the Red Lake Ojibwa means living by themselves and practicing traditions. It doesn't need a defense, they're doing it, they don't need help from academics in the cities. Environmentalists are always going to want to talk to Natives, really, so that's why I feel like I have something different to say. Maybe I'm just offering another fictitious image?

A!: Does Vizenor use the term "simulation"? Obviously I know about Baudrillard using that word…

D: He does draw on Baudrillard, so if people aren't familiar with the concept, it refers to the making of a map that is 1:1 in scale, where the representation replaces the actual thing. It's easy to see that none of the shit on TV about Indians is real. Representation is an enemy, so I'm not positing that there's a right one. Every movie… it's a mythical thing, it's not real. Its just spectacle. Vizenor is saying that the real thing is the Ojibwa spirit of survival and we lose something when we learn to identify with the Image. I don't know if there's a real thing under everything, I guess.

A!: Right. This reminds me of watching Natives who I respect get all hot under the collar about the feather headdresses that the sexy people are wearing to concerts… I totally accept that this is the same thing as wearing blackface or whatever… and *privileged people do that.* That's almost the definition of privilege, that you get to wear the scalps of your enemies around your neck or whatever [laughter]. I guess there's a liberal thing at the heart of this that says "yes, colonization happened, yes there're horrific class differences, yes, *racism* by some definition is at the heart of the american engine… and we should hide it!" In other words the fight against the headdress isn't the fight. Not at all. But a lot of people get so wound up about these being the fights. And especially the headdress… I mean, it's not my culture… this is not the universal sign of Natives. Anyways, something of a sidebar, sorry…

D: No, that is something that I think about. I question what kind of understanding of racism includes the idea that you could just ask someone not to be racist, and they'll be just like, "Oh yea, you're right. What was I thinking?" It's not about winning moral arguments. When it comes to headdresses, it's possible people on your reservation did wear headdresses during the time when that attracted tourism. I've seen old pictures at Red Lake with men in headdresses, and it shows you… it's not always about calling other people out. I also see how much we've been affected by these images as well. They had to wear headdresses because that's what people thought natives did. But you have to give up anything left of the Ojibwa to become an Indian.

A!: This is a big topic of conversation in my family because we were involved in putting on powwows in the area. Of course a traditional powwow would be acorns and raccoons, it wouldn't be flashy looking at all. It would look like woodland stuff, which is drab and dark colors, no yellow feathers or spears…

[laughter]

…and tomahawks and all that nonsense. So of course that wouldn't bring any of the white people with deep pockets who will spend $500 on a necklace. Or, you'd get people for the cool baskets, but…

D: I think what you're describing also applies to Native radicals. You have to present yourself as a Native to non-Natives, so you're going to have to simulate. To me that's humiliating.

[laughter]

A!: What we're talking about are complex deep problems that are not solvable, and those kind of questions tend to get called postmodern. So how is the direction you are taking this conversation in, not postmodern?

D: Well… By default it is postmodern, but it's not coming from France. One sort of becomes postmodern if you're living in this society with cultural schizophrenia. You could line up these categories, like multi-centeredness vs centralization, there are certain concepts that line up with postmodernism, like the postmodern premise that there are many stories, not one central truth. While the Ojibwa compromise is "there's science, but we can still tell our stories, which are not invalidated." There is also an obvious indigenous influence on French theory going in the other direction, in the form of Pierre Clastres' war machines, Situationist potlatch, and so forth. We could also reach the conclusions of animism using object-oriented ontology—the idea that humans are not the center of the universe. But I wouldn't say it's postmodern. Not an easy answer I guess.

A!: I would say that people calling this postmodern is basically name-calling, and is really a complaint about not knowing what to do, and wanting to be told what to do.

D: I think the way that the question is asked already limits how we can answer it. I'm not convinced that we can have the right ideas, and then go forth and change the world. I think I'm part of the world and the world changes me. I don't think that we have special consciousness we can bestow on other people. Or that there's a way forward. And maybe that there's not a way backward either. My only answer is that it's complicated. If the idea is decolonization (that is, understanding Native people) be cautious when someone tells you that they have the answer, that they know the right approach for working with Native people. Skip the anti-oppression workshops. There's not one way because there's not one Native society. So there's not an easy solution. If you want to learn from Indians, consider caring about the people close to you right now. Try to get to the point that what you're doing is revolutionary, without waiting for some kind of break.

NOTE * "For America to Live, Europe Must Die!" starts out with this passage: The only possible opening for a statement of this kind is that I detest writing. The process itself epitomizes the European concept of "legitimate" thinking; what is written has an importance that is denied the spoken. My culture, the Lakota culture, has an oral tradition, so I ordinarily reject writing. It is one of the white world's ways of destroying the cultures of non-European peoples, the imposing of an abstraction over the spoken relationship of a people.

Nihilist Animism, by Aragorn!

Ultimately everything I do, every project, everything I build, every relationship I start is going to fail. The world, to the extent that I am part of it, is also dissolving. This building/destroying is my expression of a feeling that lives somewhere between the Protestant work ethic, the will to inflict anarchy on the world, and an attitude against the projects of Man. I am satisfied living here, in this unstable place, continuing to do things that will blow away as soon as the center stops holding. I'm satisfied to call this nihilism, not because that is what it is, but because our culture is into naming things and I am into sending lemmings off of the cliffs of their own creation.

There is a current that breezily uses animism as a solution to the "problem of spirituality." I have concerns. An older article on the topic, Sarah Anne Lawless' "The Song of the Land: Bioregional Animism,"* both demonstrates and refers to the problems of immediatist spirituality rather well. On the one hand we benefit from the knowledge (mostly from anthropological data) of the seeming parallelism between many peoples (i.e. that everyone, in the past, was an animist) and on the other hand any attempt to practice animism either suffers from being a sort of cultural appropriation or a hokey stab in the dark that does not immediately satisfy a cultural need and feels embarrassingly small compared to the greatness of the whole earth.

There is a painful gap between being (or naming yourself) an animist and feeling the glory of the profane (and holy) things around you. This gap is enormous. It is filled with the mono-culture religions, civilization, and technocracy. This trinity makes the compelling claim that the holy holy is in fact achievable by ritual, law, and blinking lights. It claims this with the promise of personal salvation and potential of private revelation by way of priest, urban living, and new cell phones.

It an enormous provocation to say that kneeling alone by the bank of a river and being cleansed by the sacred is a pure, unadulterated animism. It may be a true moment (especially to someone enveloped in spectacle and lies) but it is not a complete one. At some point one packs up the REI equipment in the Subaru and drives back home. Sometime later one posts about it on Tumblr. One is not complete in the moment, but instead is an observer of one's own life. That life can feel like a series of real moments punctuated by gaps of disconnection that look like daily life. Living can be like a problem that can be solved after retirement or whatever.

Animism (grand, capital A) began to die as the City was being born. This does not mean the urge died, but that urge primarily moves us against ourselves and towards camping trips, Eschatology, and faith– based approaches to the sickness of this world. Our question is whether mediated experiences are the only ones we are capable of. If that is the case, as is likely, then our capacity for revelatory joy is similarly curtailed, all arguments to the contrary. If we are indeed broken are we capable of NOT being broken? As anarchists who have an interest in how the world operates, and perhaps how we could perform as wooden shoes to it, we are naive about what grinding gears mean today. We think it is enough to change the world without realizing that troubleshooting gears is a quarter of what the world does. We have urges but little wisdom about the unforeseen consequences of our small strategies. This is the reason why we are so

hungry for the possibility of animism, a spiritual practice where desire and capacity are mapped perfectly.

The reason we will not solve this problem like the little special snowflakes that we are is because of exactly that. Just as monotheism has succeeded in the deception that it represents a personal relationship between you and the almighty (parsed and mediated by priests, ministers, and the dining room table) animism needs a social fabric, outside of the civilized order, to keep warm. This social fabric isn't as simple as playing outdoors with other children, starving for life lessons from the kitchen table where the elders sit and talk, or rituals that help you understand that you are a part of something large. But one can imagine such simplicity. One can imagine life without screens as that life just passed us by, but that is only a fraction of what it would take to live a whole life. While the cell phone may itself be sacred and alive, the things we see on it are mundane and ordinary and make us the same.

It is on infertile land that future spiritual practitioners attempt to live. These are hardscrabble lives, devoid of community or anything but scraps of information of how others did what you are trying to do. In this context it makes perfect sense that racial, silly, or fantastic elements (often the same thing) often infiltrate what is an impossible effort. It's not that we can't "go back," it is that doing so is just as difficult as marching to somewhere completely new (whether Narnia or into the Star Wars universe). The new just seems easier.

What I would propose, what a nihilist animism would entail, would be an acknowledgment that a spiritual endeavor must come from a sociable practice. This might be a conversation between seven of us in the woods, or different sets in different places but it has to pass the test of the I/we. If you can find a group of people who are willing to ride the tension of being individuated, having undergone the great pain of core alienation in the modern world, while not privileging one's own experiences in a group then you could begin. This would look like a long waiting, while the traffic passes overhead, while your devices beep, bop, beep in your car, when you could be doing other things, for the world around you to expose its language to you. This would not happen quickly. It would probably take years and then it could shape a set of principles, a path to walk, that would make sense to your set of people. This is why it is impossible to imagine in this world, the context has shifted too radically to imagine building a set of tools over years before even thinking about using them. The context has shifted too radically to imagine doing anything so long term with sociability.

This long listening project does not make sense in a world of traffic, screens, and bullshit dichotomies like I and we. But this is the start. One, find a set of people, two, find a language. That language should probably not be a public one because the task that comes next is all too vulnerable. We are talking about creating something that the history of the current order has done a bang–up job of genociding, mocking, and parading in front of the slavering consumers of modern spectacle for their amusement. Keeping this language secret will be nearly impossible in a world of social media but the task isn't nearly complete then. Finally this language has to become meaningful. With it a set of people, who will have to become multi-generational, have to disassemble and recreate a world that does not suffer from monotheism, civilization, and modern technology.

That impossible task set I share with you is the closest thing I would put forward as a recommended practice. A worldweary rebuilding of the very reasons we should do things together at all. A practice I am myself incapable of participating in because I have been broken by the same things as you. My mind is no longer limber enough to learn a new language. My heart is

too scarred to do something so honest with a group of new people and too experienced to do it with the monsters I surround myself with (for other reasons). To go deep enough to subvert the conditioning and violence of this world is just impossible enough that I can imagine the kind of person who would attempt it but I have no idea what will result, even in a best case scenario.

I dream of free actors who live without fear. I imagine words that speak beyond comprehension. I imagine the same goals that I have expressed lived by people who care for one another, who laugh at the empty sociability of our era, who are the anarchy unleashed unto the world. I imagine connections to the world that I am not capable of. This impossible set of conditions and potentials is why a nihilist animism appeals to me at all. It names capabilities I don't have in a world I can't imagine living in. That's all one can ask of oneself.

NOTE * http://sarahannelawless.com/2014/02/21/ the-song-of-the-land-bioregional-animism/

Spacious Treeline In Words, by Gerald Vizenor

EDITOR'S NOTE: *"Spacious Treeline in Words" by Gerald Vizenor is from an out– of–print collection called* Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent.

> *"Between the too warm flesh of the literal event and the cold skin of the concept runs meaning. This is how it enters into the book. Everything enters into, transpires in the book. This is why the book is never finite. It always remains suffering and vigilant. . . . Every exit from the book is made within the book. . . . If writing is not a tearing of the self toward the other within a confession of infinite separation, if it is a delectation of itself, the pleasure of writing for its own sake, the satisfaction of the artist, then it destroys itself. . . . One emerges from the book, because . . . the book is not in the world, but the world is in the book."*
> — Jacques Derrida
> *Writing and Difference*

Holding forth at the spacious treelines with the bears and the crows, the best tellers in the tribes peel peel peel peel their words like oranges, down to the last navel. Mimicked in written forms over winter now, transposed in mythic metaphors, the interior glories from oral traditions burst in conversations and from old footprints on the trail.

"The text you write must prove to me *that it desires me*," writes Roland Barthes in his book *The Pleasures of the Text.* "This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language. .. . I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me. . . . The language I speak within myself is not of my time; it is prey, by nature, to ideological suspicion; thus it is with this language that I must struggle. I write because I do not want the words I find…"

The most imaginative tribal writers seldom peel peel peel peel their oranges at random, not even in the ritual darkness, but untribal translators and talebearers march march march their words down mission rows in perfect grammatical time, building word castles here and there in the sacred sand, territorial and colonial verbs, fabricating their words in prestressed phrases, interior mechanical landscapes, separating tribal orchards from the sacred. The written word leaves a different footprint near the treeline. The oral tradition is a visual event, but in written form stories are formed as scripts, struck into print from grammatical philosophies, so that the reader, trained to read with critical class expectations, becomes the master of sand castles, a teller and a listener in a single interior voice from a written template. The reader remembers footprints near the treeline, near the limits of understanding in written words, but the trail is never marked with printed words. The trail is made as a visual event between imaginative creators, tellers, and listeners: we hold our breath beneath the surface, the written word, but we know that respiration and transpiration are possible under water.

"The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas," writes Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, "for my body does not have the same ideas I do. . . . The pleasure of the text is not the pleasure of the corporeal striptease or of narrative suspense. In these cases, there is no tear, no edges: a gradual unveiling: the entire excitation takes refuge in the *hope* of seeing the sexual organ ... or in knowing the end of the story. . . . Thus, what I enjoy in a narrative is not directly its content or even its structure, but rather the abrasions I impose upon the fine surface: I read on, I skip, I look up, I dip in again. Which has nothing to do with the deep laceration the text of bliss inflicts upon language itself, and not upon the simple temporality of its reading. ..."

These imaginative narratives are written in double visions, peeled from visual experiences on the trail near the spacious treeline and transposed in tribal visual word cinemas. The four interior scenes, the stories within stories and between tellers and listeners, are satirical mind theaters staged at the crossroads near the orchards, near the windmills on distant moors, mountains, and in classrooms.

"The imagination is always aware of the present. . . ." writes Mary Warnock in her book *Imagination*. "Neither understanding alone nor sensation alone can do the work of imagination, nor can they be conceived to come together without imagination. . . . Only imagination is in this sense creative; only it makes pictures of things."

The scenes in these stories, in these word cinemas, are visual dream flights, untimed in unusual places, with terminal believers and urban shamans and landfill meditators. The word *indian* appears in lowercase letters in these stories.

Classroom Windmills

Tulip shares her dreams with me at dusk. She is fascinated with natural power, wind through windmills, the moon through pine boughs, white water down the mountain, salmon in the sun, crows over the prairie. She builds miniature windmills, and she has transformed our tribal resource center, one of several special ethnic libraries on campus, windows opened wide to the ocean, into a palace of whirrs and wind rattles.

Tulip reveals no secrets, and she bears no confessions from her tribal origins. She is more beautiful than the wind from all directions and she is my weakness, but her weakness has never been me. She has but one weakness, it is her pure hatred for indian men, parts of me included, mixedblood or whole; and, though she is obsessed with natural power, she is inhibited about the instinctive power of sex. Most offensive to her is the language of sex.

Tulip finds much more pleasure and awareness in water and wind than she does in masculine muscles or an erect penis. The copper blades on her miniature windmills, white water, sandpipers, wounded killdeer, the motions and sounds from the earth, morning in the cottonwoods, but not indian men, speak the natural languages she understands. Tulip trusts me, rather, she trusts the secrets and silence in me, and she shares her dreams with me when we are alone.

Histories harden like prairie mud and disappear in her memories. The first time we were together she was a flower, the wind was gentle over the meadow, and the shamans and the tribal clowns at the borders of sexual reversals burst over the earth, through the wet leaves in the summer ceremonies of the sun. Sexual contradictions are like the changes in the wind, enchanting, wind and rain on the leaves, the pleasures are tacit and preternatural. We touch with words,

but she believes that the words on sex are demeaning, metaphors from violence and domination, reductions from natural experiences, the opposites from nurturance. She demands silence in sex, restraint like birds in magical flight, control, too much control, wordless and breathless at the most ecstatic moments. Not a thunderstorm in her, but a warm hesitant rain on the cedar and fern, no more than whispers. She is not a shadow, she is the moon.

Tulip has sound reasons to hate indian men. As a child, a beautiful natural creature like a fur salmon upstream, and as a young woman, she was abused by several indian men. Living in a small shack on the reservation, she watched drunken indian men lust for women, word pits, scored brown books, and she heard the harsh and violent sounds of sex over her mother and her sisters.

Tulip has the haunting face of a woodland animal, soft skin, smooth black hair. Her smile flickers from the first dream fires of the tribes. She chooses to be alone, to be silent, to live with secrets, to be with her winds like a windmill near the ocean. Tulip is the wind, she is nature, and I am a fool.

Tulip is in my dreams.

The sound of the windmills reminds me of her power.

Tulip is also a victim of what she remembers and avoids. Behind her desk, through a thin plaster wall in the next office, she can hear, three or four times a week, the uninhibited and unabashed sounds of wild sex.

Satirical Stallion

Twice a week in the afternoon, two hours before his special seminar on tribal literature, Pink Stallion has loud sex with blondes in his office next to the tribal resource center. The windmills, even in a stiff wind, do not rise above the sounds of sex. Tulip cannot avoid hearing these smut events through the wall behind her desk.

"Blondes stimulate ideas," asserts the Pink Stallion. When we hear blonde laughter coming through the thin wall from his office, moaning over the sound of the windmills, the center turns silent. Even the windmills seem to slow down to listen. Lips open and close with special care, books drop closed, pens poised, while we wait to hear the final cries from the blonde resurrection of General George Custer.

Tulip hears the first sounds near her desk. The opening of the couch against the wall, a thud, a moan, curses, hard breathing—all drive her to pack her books and wind charts and leave for her apartment in the hills. She dreams there, flashing her fur upstream in the sun.

Pink Stallion bridled his mixedblood horse in time for our seminar on tribal literature. Twice a week he appears with flush cheeks, lecture notes in hand. From the curve of his smile like a trickster he must know that we listen in on his time with blondes.

"This week," said Pink Stallion, opening the seminar, "we will discuss the meaning of culture, mythical opposition and resolution, sacred connections and secular separations, and experiences in the oral tradition, as discovered in several indian novels, and in *Landfill Meditation*, a collection of skin stories about an urban shaman."

"Shall we begin with these questions, please: What use is culture if it does not support our dreams and visions? As a form of consciousness, is culture a denial of mortality? The denial of

the earth in us? Should we be at war, word wars in opposition with a culture that invalidates our dreams and visions?"

Silence.

We were bored; after the sounds of sex through the wall we were bored with seminars and trick questions. Bound in urban rituals, we were bored with words; material magic and street chatter limited our imagination. We were unable to respond to metaphors with more than passive political rhetoric and disconnected curses.

"Shit, man, culture? What culture you talkin on, brother?" carped Bad Mouth, the first and the last to speak. Her words were broken arrows. She resisted ideas, and from her passive resistance she found personal power in symbolic opposition. Mixedblood and urban, she was immortal in word wars.

Bad Mouth never reads. She frowns and sulks. She hates books, white people, and insects, in that order. The whirr and rattle of the miniature windmills sound to her like thousands of insects, and she hates the wind too because of the windmills. She prevails with hatred and insists that what sounds evil must be evil.

Pink Stallion resists the world in a different manner. When he was first asked to teach a seminar on indian literature for indians, he resisted because there would be no white students there, which meant in translation, no blondes. He called such a seminar "bone head literature for racists," but as the power of the indian students increased, he turned the indian seminar idea into an act of survival.

Pink Stallion leaned forward, mounted his white-framed reading glasses, and read from *Myth and Meaning* by Claude Levi-Strauss: "Mythical stories are, or seem, arbitrary, meaningless, absurd, yet nevertheless they seem to reappear all over the world. . . . Each of us is a kind of crossroads where things happen. The crossroads is purely passive; something happens there. A different thing, equally valid, happens elsewhere. There is no choice, it is just a matter of chance."

Silence.

The students looked out the window.

The windmills whirred.

Pink Stallion looked out the window, looked toward the ocean with the students, while he continued his lecture: "The invented indian in us has become a perfect victim, separated from the living, an object with no sacrificial significance, *objet-trouve*, a word icon, perfect inventions from romantic literature. The invented indian is thrown in us from a white wheel, a white ceramic creation without nurturance."

"You always talk about that shit, man, what white people are thinking, how about talking about what indians are thinking for a change?" demanded Injun Time, who was the brightest in a pride of tribal fools. She received an urban vision and was given her sacred pet name by the leader of the San Francisco Sun Dancers.

"Did you hear me?" asked Injun Time.

"Why do you always quote white people? Quote some indians for a change."

"Language, as we have discussed it in the past, structures our perceptions of the world," Pink Stallion explained. Looking toward the ocean, he pinched his lips until the skin turned white.

"Did you hear me the second time?" demanded Injun Time. "How come you never find out anything that indians write and think about?"

"You are quite right, Miss Injun Time," said Pink Stallion, leaning back in his chair at the head of the seminar table. His eyes returned from the ocean. "Your timing is perfect, because, it is now

the time and place to consider indian authors, but first, let me make a check around the room to see who has read the indian materials."

Silence.

Fast Food, short, fat, and flush, true to his urban dream name, was the first to respond while he munched on corn chips. He brushed the crumbs from the seminar table in front of him, and mumbled that he had not read "all of the stuff, the stories."

"Which parts did you read?"

"The best parts that are indian."

"Name one part."

"Sure, the part where the white man gets what he's got coming to him, that's the part that I liked the best," said Fast Food. Token White, lips and cheeks twitching from the opposition in her consciousness between tribal traditions and her word place in the urban world, said that she had read the stories, but she wished that she had not done so, because, she explained, indian author or not, she thought the tribal people in the stories were made to look foolish.

"Have you ever heard of satire?"

"Satire is not sacred," answered Token White, fulfilling the meaning of her romantic name. The students used their descriptive pet names from the urban sun dance. Token White stands tall, white, angular, absorbed in indian dreams, and tribal by serious practice.

"Mother earth is satire," said Pink Stallion.

"No, never," said Token White.

"Never, never," said Fine Print, moving his lips in silent recitation, passive and distant. He confessed that he was not a reader, never read prose, he explained, because prose is not traditional and because he is a writer of poems. The manner in which some students avoid linear thinking is linear.

Bad Mouth, slouching in her chair, sneered behind dark sunglasses, curled her upper lip, and cursed. "Shit, man, it never mean nothin to me, no how, man, indians never write that shit, man, indians got an oral tradition, man." Bad Mouth survived in the world with hatred. Invectives were the source of her urban visions, and her dream name, but she has not been an indian for long, which makes it difficult to know where and when the indian hatred begins and ends. Three years ago when her mother told her that her grandmother was a mixedblood indian from Mission La Soledad, Bad Mouth demanded that the Bureau of Indian Affairs make her an indian and give her a scholarship to college. Before her indian enlightenment she told her friends that her parents were both Maoris from New Zealand. "The third world is all the same," she said, and boasted that her father was a leader in the Northern California Hau Hau Movement, a sort of sacred urban cargo cult.

"What was that?"

"Shit, man, third world, man."

"Third world where?" asked Pink Stallion.

"Right here, man, shit." Bad Mouth was scheduled to graduate at the end of this quarter, but Rubie Blue Welcome failed her ass in a seminar on tribal languages, which is a degree requirement in indian studies. She did not wait long on the rim. With Doc Cloud Burst and the San Francisco Sun Dancers, Bad Mouth is leading a movement to control the department with urban indian spiritual power and eliminate the courses she did not pass.

Touch Tone, in braids and plastic bear claws, could have been named for plastic, but because he is best known for his long distance telephone conversations back to the reservation, he was

named in a dream for the fastest dial. Wherever he visits he leaves a trail of long distance telephone bills. Aiming his water pistol around the room, he said he never did read what the indians wrote because indians live in oral traditions, and a real indian teacher would tell stories and not make indians read stories, "what is there to read in the indian world?"

"Perceptive question," said Pink Stallion.

"Shapersons are the best writers," said Injun Time. She tells stories with the voice of a shaman, or as she insists, a "shaperson." She sees auras and speaks about magical flights to other worlds where she learned the languages of plants and animals and birds. She knows about animals, and medicines from plants. Animals come to her on the streets and tell her stories, complain about their health in the cities, and laugh about their foolishness. Injun Time bears vitamins in her medicine bundle, a common practice among the members of the San Francisco Sun Dancers.

"When indians write, indians write," said Injun Time, fingering her leather medicine bundle around her neck, "and when indians read, indians read, and when this indian reads she reads what she likes to read, and she likes the short stories she read about the landfill meditator because he had a shit load of visions."

Silence.

The windmills whirred.

Injun Time smiled.

Pink Stallion slapped his thighs.

Transformations are not uncommon in the tribal world. Pink Stallion wished that he could become a large bird or a dark bear during his special seminar for indian students and flash his fur on the wind. He appeared now, chin in hand, to be soaring, but he explained later that he was transfixed with boredom and repressed hostilities about some of the indian students. "Tulip is a shorebird, and she transforms me from boredom with her windmills," he said, but then he changed her metaphor to a small animal, one he could mount no doubt.

"Have teachers become the ceremonial victims," Pink Stallion whispered over the windmills, and then he bounced from his hands and pawed through his notes and papers like a bear at a picnic.

"In time, all in good time, now, let me show all of you fine oral scholars, avid readers of indian literature, how to read, since this is your seminar and my survival," said Pink Stallion, turning the page in a collection of short stories written by indians. "*Landfill Meditation* has an outside and an interior observer, or an omniscient narrator who goes for it and knows what is coming down. The story starts with a teacher telling stories and then one voice leads to another, as stories did in the oral tradition, from teller to listener to listener and more. We move through time with a shaman until the end when the writer delivers us back to the classroom where we started as readers and listeners. These stories take place in a house of word mirrors, with the denouement being little more than the return of the narrator to our interior space."

"Shit, man. … "

"Shit, what, woman," responded Pink Stallion.

"Shit, man, you done teaching here."

"We were done when we were invented," countermoved the Pink Stallion from behind the windmills. He remounted his reading glasses and cleared his throat. "These *Landfill Meditation* stories begin with Clement Beaulieu, a mixedblood character from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. Beaulieu conducts seminars on Native American philosophies and tribal meditation, environmental fantasies, animal languages, and talking and walking backward, one night

each week at Shaman High, which, as you know, is a transcendental college in Marin County, California.

Bad Mouth stopped two windmills before she shouldered her red pack, and leaving the seminar and cultural resource center, she slammed the door three times.

Injun Time straightened the blades on the windmills.

Pink Stallion looked out toward the setting sun over the ocean. The wind was cool on his face, and he remembered the stories he would tell about the urban shaman teacher. He looked down at his book and began to read about landfill meditation and tribal transformations.

The windmills whirred in time.

Bad Mouth returned to the seminar table, mean as ever, with three new urban sun dancers to hold her evil line.

Urban Shamans

Last week, when the in teaching trickster entered the classroom, conversations stopped in the middle of sentences. He removed his leather coat with unusual caution, walked backward moving his head from side to side like an animal at the shoreline, smiled, turned out the overhead fluorescent lights, and then he waited near the open window in silence. There, in his woodland visions, he followed the water moons backward over the mountains on familiar tribal vision faces. Traffic over the Golden Gate Bridge roared down the word maps and sacred place names in the distance.

Pink Stallion stopped reading and looked around the table to see who was listening. Fast Food was munching corn chips as usual. Touch Tone was sleeping with his head back and his mouth wide open.

"How does he know that sacred stuff?" asked Token White, strumming the sinew on her favorite bow.

"Sacred memories."

"But his stories are like entertainment," Token White insisted. "How can that stuff be sacred?" "Memories have no unconscious forms," explained Stallion. "Entertainment is not a categorical experience we seldom remember events in forms."

"What was that?"

"When we tell about our experiences we remember events outside the forms in which the experiences first occurred"

"Shit, man."

"Remember sex first and the backseat later."

"Now we meet the characters in the stories," said Pink Stallion. The trickster told stories backward about the four directions and the four tribal characters who traveled with him that night from the window: Martin Bear Charme the landfill meditator, Happie Comes Last the demure gossiper, Oh Shinnah Fast Wolf the metatribal moralist, and Belladonna Winter Catcher the roadwoman with terminal creeds.

The following is an imaginative translation from the *drawkcab*, or backward patois, in which these stories were first told and recorded:

"Backward what?" asked Token White.

"Patois means a special language, street talk, for example, or a common dialect which is different from the standard language," explained Pink Stallion.

Martin Bear Charme owns a reservation, the teaching trickster told backward from the darkness, teaches a seminar on refuse meditation, and circumscribes his own unusual images in the material world.

Charme commands us to believe that imaginative meditation means walking backward through the refuse and telling visual stories to writers who never take notes, but not, he said twice, but not speaking to be recorded or smiling to be photographed.

Words are rituals in the oral tradition, from the knowledge of creation, little visions on the winds, said the old tribal scavenger to his students, not electronic sounds separating the tellers from the listeners. Landfill meditation restores the connections between refuse and the refuser.

Charme, mixedblood master meditator who tells that he walked backward down from Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota, is much more vain than astute about his photogenic face and emulsion visage. He has an enormous nose attached to his smooth face, and in his stare is the power of the bear.

Oh Shinnah Fast Wolf, autonomous mistress of metatribal ceremonies, started soughing on stage at the Unitarian Church in Berkeley under the sounds of automobile traffic, about the guardians at the heart of mother earth, while a disciple in sparrow feathers, bearing a pacific smile, held open the double doors for one more cash contribution to balance the earth at the fault.

"Shit, man," said Bad Mouth.

"She did not explain her identities," said Pink Stallion who was at the meeting, filled with cedar smoke and terminal believers, "but she said she was authorized to speak for mother earth."

Happie Comes Last, reservation born laborer in a healthfood cooperative, a horsewoman, and columnist for the *Mountain Meditator*, a critical tabloid on meditation and holistic healing, would have been the last cash donor, but there at the double doors, sorting through the cards and letters in her leather pouch like a marsupial, she found a free press ticket and a caricature of the refuse meditation leader. Flashing the ticket and caricature, she asked the disciple, as she moved beneath his feathers and outstretched arms, where was the refuse meditator sitting?

Charme sits over there, the disciple said, pointing with his chin and blond head; he is in the white pants, the one with the oil on his nose, in the back near the window.

Comes Last leaned back to gossip with the attractive blond disciple: Did you know that he walks and talks backward? He never answers interviews but in public places like this. No, the blond disciple whispered back over his shoulder, where are his private places? Martin Bear Charme, founder of the Landfill Meditation Reservation and the seminar with the same name, scooped the oil from his outsized nose with his dark middle finger, his habit once or twice an hour, and spread the viscid mounds over his cuticles. Sitting near the window, one would never know, watching his smooth hands in backward speech, that the refuse meditator was reservation born, once poor, and undereducated for urban survival.

"Right on, man," exclaimed Fast Food.

Nose Charmer, his tribal pet name on the reservation, hitchhiked to San Francisco when he was sixteen and settled in a waterfront hotel. He studied welding on a federal relocation program, but scrap connections bored him so he turned to scavenging and made a fortune hauling and filling wetlands with solid waste and urban swill. Once a worthless mud flat, his lush refuse reservation on South San Francisco Bay near Mountain View is now worth millions.

Charme and his legal advisor, Bicker Becker, have petitioned the federal government for recognition of the reservation as a sovereign tax-free tribal meditation nation, a place where laws and liens are intuitive. Petulant Becker, titular dean of the California Meditation and Levitation Law School, argues that even individuals in shamanic flight and astral projections should be recognized as duty-free ports.

There never was refuse like this on the reservation, Charme told his seminar, because on the old reservations we were the refuse, we were the waste, solid and swill on the run, telling stories from a discarded culture to amuse the colonial refusers. The blond disciple dropped his arms and his smile, and the double doors wagged closed on the traffic sounds. Oh Shinnah, her hair bound back in tight braids, cut counter shapes around her head in abstruse hand rituals and then snapped two match heads together four times, igniting a small cedar bundle of her on the floor.

Comes Last, smiling and nodding with embarrassment, broke through the silent aisles while the little chapel filled with thick, sweet smoke. Down the back row she cleared her throat and then perched on the last chair, not knowing that the old scavenger commanded the last place near the window, his escape distance from spiritual faults.

Chanting *wanaki nimiwin wanaki*, Charme scooped his nose oil once more while Oh Shinnah focused on the visions in her crystal ball, and then in perfect tribal trickster time he rolled with his chair past Comes Last in magical flight toward the window, a movement she later described in her column as *soaring backward on a shaman chair*.

Pink Stallion paused to tell us that he was there too, at the meeting, sitting near the shaman in the back of the chapel. He explained that magical flight was a common shamanic tribal experience, moving through other times and places, other lives and spaces in creation.

"Shaman understand the language, what was that word special languages?" asked Injun Time.

"Patois."

"Shaman understand animal and plant patois too, but what do the indian words mean, the ones you told?"

"*Wanaki* means peace and *nimiwin* means dancing, in the tribal language of the *anishinaabe*," said Pink Stallion. He continued reading.

The first time Comes Last called on the refuse meditator at his urban reservation he was sitting in a room filled with trash. She asked him about his place of birth and his theories on the mind, but he said nothing more than *wanaki nimiwin wanaki*. She asked questions four times before leaving his reservation.

Martin Bear Charme smiled, nodded his head four times backward, and then laughed, throwing his nose back like a bear at the tree line ha ha ha haaaa.

Looking up from her ball and turtle fetish, Oh Shinnah stopped her invocation on mother earth between the words *intuition* and *compassion* to explain that she had serious business on her mind front about and in her heart about mineral companies and progressive reservation governments, and, she said, we will not compete with the animals.

Pink Stallion added that several animals were walking around the chapel, panting, snorting, and thumping on the wooden floor, which interrupted the speaker.

"I was sitting near the window, in the back where Martin Bear Charme soared backward," said Pink Stallion. "A calico cat leaped through the opened window into my lap. Well, I was startled, but being around so many shamans, I pretended that cats come to me all the time." The truth is that Pink Stallion hates cats, but cats seem attracted to him.

Wanaki nimiwin wanaki ha ha ha haaaa, Charme throwing his voice backward from his escape distance window. Who would believe you were a meditator, tribal no less, Comes Last whispered out of the side of her mouth. She shifted from side to side on her perch. She is a bird who appears perched wherever and on whatever she sits. When she speaks she thrusts her lips out like a beak, giving rise to her sickle feathers, an avian illusion in the willows.

What does it mean?

What does it mean?

Wanaki nimiwin wanaki over and over.

Four skins lost in dreams ha ha ha haaaa.

Not foreskins, she said through her tense lips, indians never did circumcisions, tell the truth now, what does it mean?

"Shit, man, real indians never talk like that, man," snapped Bad Mouth as she shouldered her red pack. She slammed her chair to the table, stopped several windmills again, slammed her chair to the table, and then slammed the door when she left the resource center with her three urban sun dance followers.

Wanaki peaceful place, *nimiwin wanaki* dancing in a peaceful place ha ha ha haaaa, said the landfill meditator to the bird sitting near the window.

Where?

Landfill and summer swill.

Talk sense, Comes Last demanded, opening her leather-bound notebook. How are those words spelled? she asked.

D R A W K C A B N A M A H S

Mister Charme, she said, shifting her head to the side to see his nose, what does it mean, landfill meditation? Please in a phrase or two, speak slow now.

Unstable.

Unstable what?

Unstable in an earthquake.

Be serious, please.

Stable.

Stable what?

Stable on a windmill in a mindswell.

Never mind, she said, closing her leather notebook. Damn fool, what do you know about meditation? Nothing!

Refuse meditation cures cancer with visions. Some people clean their kitchens better than others too, said the solid waste magnate.

Mister Charme, please, you are speaking to a healthfood worker, she said, brushing lumps of leather from her black dress, not one of your meditation victims.

Charme scooped the oil from his nose and continued. Clean minds and clean kitchens are delusions, unrewarded altruism. When our visions are clean we seem to feel much better, but no less insecure.

Comes Last turned her head, avoiding the meditator, pretending not to be interested in what he was telling. Stop talking at me, she said, bouncing in her chair. But you listen so much better when you are not me ha ha ha haaaa. Pretend you are not interested.

Damn fool.

Once upon a time taking out the garbage was an event in our lives, a state of being connected to action. We were part of the rituals connecting us to the earth, from the places food grew through the house and our bodies, and then back to the earth. Garbage was real, part of creation, not an objective invasion of cans and cartons.

Refuse meditation teaches us to turn the mind back to the earth through the visions of real waste, the trash meditator continued. His voice distracted the celebrants sitting in the next row. Faces turned and scowled. The old scavenger smiled back and resumed his stories.

We are the garbage, the waste, we make it and dump it, to be separated from it is a cancer-causing delusion, he said, but with some doubt in the tone of his voice. We cannot separate ourselves clean and perfect by dumping our trash out back. The earth is a victim of our internal trash.

Pink Stallion pointed out certain ironies and the references to ideas derived from meditation and holistic health. "The earth has become a sacrificial victim," he said, "because the white man has lost his mythic connections with the earth, like families abandoned on the interstates."

Stop this now, Comes Last insisted. You made your fortune on trash, and now you are making me sick with it. Let me sit here now and not listen to you.

Sickness is one of the best meditation experiences. Think about being sick, focus on your stuffed nose, make your mind an unclean kitchen. Now, said the old scavenger, rather than hating to clean up the kitchen, making it smell different, get right down with the odors. Focus on the odors in the corners, take the odors in, you know, the same way we smell our underarms and feet, because we are the bad smells we smell separated from our own real kitchens in the mind.

What was that?

Never mind . . . and the clean words that part us from the real smells leave us defensive victims of fetid swill and cancer. Take on odors in the same way we take on what we fear, become the opposition, become the swill. Did you understand that part? Ha ha ha haaaa.

You are sick, what you need are some clean words in your head, said Comes Last, moving two chairs down the back row out of his bad breath range.

Cancer is first a word, nothing more, a separation without vision, he said, following her down the row. We are culture bound to be clean, but being clean is a delusion and a separation from the visual energies of the earth. Holistic health is a harmonious vision, not an aromatic word prison.

Listen, we are the dreamers for the earth, he said in a deep voice. Turning down the dreams with clean words, defensive terminal creeds, earth separations, denies odors and death and causes cancer.

The celebrants turned toward the old scavenger in the back row and told him to be silent. One woman wagged her hand at him, warning him not to speak about diseases during sacred ceremonies in the cedar smoke.

We are death, said the refuse meditator to the woman in the next row. Unabashed, he stood and spoke in a loud voice to all the celebrants in the chapel. We are rituals, not perfect words; we are the ceremonies, not the witnesses, that connect us to the earth. We are the earth dreamers, the holistic waste, not the detached nose pinchers between the refuse and the refusers.

Go to a place in the waste to meditate, chanted the refuse meditator. Come to our reservation on the landfill to focus on waste and transcend the ideal word worlds, clean talk and terminal

creeds, and the disunion between the mind and the earth. Come meditate on trash and swill odors and become the waste that holds us to the earth.

Injun Time asked Pink Stallion to read that paragraph again. "The one about clean talk and terminal creeds. . . . That man must be a word skin."

Go to a place in the waste to meditate. . . Focus on waste and transcend the ideal word worlds, clean talk and terminal creeds, and the disunion between the mind and the earth. . . .

Pipe down in the back.

Oh Shinnah raised an eagle feather and told the mother earth celebrants that her feather made her tell the truth; should I not speak straight, the feather will tremble. Now listen, we live in a retarded country. . . . we vote for a peanut picker looking for a way to freedom and look where we have come. People are tearing up our land without examining it.

Hang with mother earth, she said, raising her fist; if the four corners tribal land is destroyed, then purification comes with a closed fist. If the electromagnetic pole at the four corners is upset, the earth will slip in space, causing the death of two-thirds of the population, no matter where you go to hide.

Oh Shinnah makes more sense with cedar smoke and fetishes than you do with all that double back talk about meditation, Comes Last declared, raising her chin.

Silence.

The lights flickered several times, and then out. The celebrants whispered in the darkness until the smell of cedar smoke in the chapel turned to the odor of landfill swill, or what Comes Last described in her column as a mixture of human excrement and dead animals. At first whiff the celebrants took cover in clean words, thinking the person next in row had passed bad air. But later, when the chapel filled with the scent of wild flowers, one celebrant allowed how terrible was the smell. While the others praised the passing of the bad odors, Comes Last, whose nose had not separated from the world of animals, smelled a bear in the darkness.

Listen ha ha ha haaaa.

Martin Bear Charme moved around the chapel in the darkness, from row to row and chair to chair, telling stories about terminal creeds. His voice seemed to rise and waver from the four directions. Words dropped from the beams, sounds came from under the chairs, and several celebrants were certain that the stories he told that night were told inside their own heads.

Listen ha ha ha haaaa.

Pink Stallion paused once more to explain how the author shifted to a different time and place. "We started out at a seminar, then moved to a church, and then to the landfill reservation, back to the church, and now to a place, as you will hear in a moment, named Orion, which is a town framed in red bricks and a constellation showing the figure of a hunter with a sword."

Terminal Creeds

Orion was framed in a great wall of red earthen bricks, said the refuse meditator. Within the red walls lived several families who were descendants of famous hunters and western bucking horse breeders. Like good horses, the sign outside the walls said, proud people keep to themselves and their own breed, but from time to time we invite others to share food and conversation.

Belladonna Winter Catcher, who was born and conceived at Wounded Knee, her traveling companion Catholic Bishop Omax Parasimo, and several other tribal pilgrims knocked at the

gate. We are tribal mixedbloods with good stories and memories from thousands of good listeners. Open the gate and let us in or we will blow your house down.

Listen to this, said Belladonna who was reading the sign on the red wall: *Terminal Creeds are Terminal Diseases. . . . The Mind is the Perfect Hunter and Narcissism is a Form of Isolation.*

The metal portcullis opened, and several guards dressed in uniforms escorted the pilgrims through the red wall. The pilgrims were examined. Information was recorded about birth places, education and experiences, travels and diseases, attitudes on women and politics. The hunters and breeders welcomed the visitors to tell stories about what was happening in the world outside the walls.

The pilgrims followed the hunters and breeders through the small town to one of the large houses where dozens of people were waiting on the front steps. Introductions and questions about political views were repeated again and again.

Thousands of questions were asked before dinner was served in the church dining room. Bishop Parasimo was the first to shift the flow of conversations. He asked the hunters and breeders sitting at his table to discuss the meaning of the messages on the outside walls. What does it mean, narcissism is a form of isolation? Please explain how the mind is the perfect hunter.

Narcissism rules the possessor, said a breeder with a deep scar on the side of his forehead. Narcissism is the fine art that turns the dreamer into paste and ashes.

The perfect hunter leaves himself and becomes the animal or bird he is hunting, said a hunter on the other side of the table. He touched his ear with his curled trigger finger as he spoke. The perfect hunter turns on himself, hunts himself in his mind. He lives on the edge of his own meaning, the edge of his own humor. He is the hunter and the hunted at the same time.

The breeders and hunters at the table smiled and nodded and then turned toward the head table where the bald banker breeder was tapping his water glass. Belladonna was sitting next to the banker. Her nervous fingers fumbled with the two beaded necklaces around her neck.

The families applauded when the banker spoke of their mission against terminal creeds. Depersonalize the word in the world of terminal believers, and we can all share the good side of humor. . . . Terminal believers must be changed or driven from our dreams.

Belladonna could feel the moisture from his hand resting on her shoulder. He referred to her as the good spirited speaker who has traveled through the world of savage lust on the interstates, this serious tribal woman, our speaker from the outside world, who once carried with her a tame white bird. Belladonna leaned back in her chair. Her thighs twitched from his words about the tame white bird. The banker did not explain how he knew that she once lived with a dove. The medicine man told her it was an evil white witch so she turned the dove loose in the woods, but the bird returned. She cursed the bird and locked it out of her house, but the white dove soared in crude domestic circles and hit the windows. The dove would not leave. One night, when she was alone, she squeezed the bird in both hands, but the dove seemed content. She shook the dove. Behind the house, against a red pine, she severed the head of the white dove with an ax. Blood spurted in her face. The headless dove flopped backward into the dark woods.

We are waiting, said the banker. Belladonna shivered near her chair, chasing the dove from her memories. She fumbled with her neck beads. Tribal values and dreams is what I will talk about.

Speak up … speak up.

Tribal values is the subject of my talk, she said in a louder voice. She dropped her hands from her beads. We are raised with values that shape our world in a different light. . . . We are tribal

and that means that we are children of dreams and visions. Our bodies are connected to mother earth, and our minds are the clouds. Our voices are the living breath of the wilderness.

My grandfathers were hunters, said the hunter with the trigger finger at his ear. They said the same thing about the hunt that you said is tribal, so what does that mean?

I am different from a whiteman because of my values, she said. I would not be white, never white. Do tell me, said an old woman breeder in the back of the room. We can see that you are different from a man, but tell us please how you are so different from *white people*.

We are different because we are raised with different values, Belladonna explained. She was fumbling with her beads again. Our parents treat us different as children. We are not punished. We live in larger families and never send our old people to homes to be alone. These are some things that make us different.

More, more.

Tribal people seldom touch each other, said Belladonna. She folded her hands over her breasts. We do not invade the personal bodies of others, and we do not stare at people when we are talking. . . . Indians have more magic in their lives.

Wait a minute, hold on there, said a hunter with an orange beard. Let me find something out here before you make me so different from the rest of the world. Tell me about this word *indian* that you use, tell me which *indians* are you talking about, or for, or are you talking for all Indians? And if you are speaking for all Indians, then how can there be truth in what you say?

Indians have their religion in common.

What does *indian* mean?

Are you so stupid that you cannot figure out what and who indians are? An indian is a member of a tribe and a person who has indian blood.

But what is *indian* blood?

Indian blood is not white blood.

Inventions, that must be what *indians* are, inventions, said the hunter with the beard. You tell me that the invention is different from the rest of the world when it was the rest of the world that invented the indian, right here on this land. We invented you and that must be why you hate us so much, because you have taken to believe in the invention. An indian is an indian because he speaks and thinks and believes he is an *indian* . . . The invention must not be so bad because the tribes have taken it up for keeps.

Mister, does it make much difference what the word *indian* means when I tell you from my heart that I have always been proud that I am an indian, said Belladonna. Proud to speak the voice of mother earth.

Please continue.

Well, as I was explaining, tribal people are closer to the earth, to the meaning and energies of the woodlands and the mountains and the plains. . . . We are not a competitive people like the whites who competed this nation into corruption and failure.

When you use the plural pronoun, asked a woman hunter with short white hair, does that mean that you are talking for all tribal people?

Fine Print leaned forward at the seminar table, moved his lips in silence for a minute or two and then asked: "What is all that shit about grammar, anyway?"

Most of them.

How about the western fishing tribes, the old tribes, the tribes that burned down their own houses in potlatch ceremonies?

Exceptions are not the rule.

Fools never make rules, said the woman with white hair. You speak from terminal creeds, not as a person of real experiences and critical substance.

Thank you for the meal, said Belladonna. She smirked and turned in disgust from the hunters and breeders. The banker placed his moist hand on her shoulder. Now, now, she will speak in good faith, said the banker, if you will listen with less critical ears. She does not want to debate her ideas. Give her another good hand. The hunters and breeders applauded. She smiled, accepted apologies, and started again.

The tribal past, our religion and dreams and the concept of mother earth, is precious to me. Living is not important if it is turned into competition and material gain. . . . Living is hearing the wind and speaking the languages of animals and soaring with eagles in magical flight. When I speak about these experiences it makes me feel powerful: the power of tribal religion and spiritual beliefs gives me protection. My tribal blood is like the great red wall you have around you here. . . . My blood moves in the circles of mother earth and through dreams without time. My tribal blood is timeless, and it gives me strength to live and deal with evil. Right on sister, right on, said the hunter with the trigger finger on his ear. He leaped to his feet and cheered for her views.

"Right on, sister," chimed Token White.

"Four skins win," said Touch Tone, nodding his loose head in agreement as he shot spurts of sacred water in the air with his red water pistol.

Pink Stallion continued reading.

Powerful speech, said a breeder.

She deserves her favorite dessert, said a hunter in a deep voice. The hunters and breeders do not trust those narcissistic persons who accept personal praise.

Shall we offer our special dessert to this innocent child? asked the breeder banker. Let me hear it now, those who think she deserves her dessert, thank you, and now those who think she does not deserve dessert for her excellent speech.

No dessert please, said Belladonna.

Fast Food said, "give it to me, then."

Now, now, how could you turn down the enthusiasm hunters and breeders who listened to your thoughts could you turn down their vote for your dessert?

The hunters and breeders cheered and whistled when the cookies were served. The circus pilgrims were not comfortable with the shift in moods, the excessive enthusiasm.

The energies here are strange, said Bishop Omax Parasimo up his sleeve. What does all this cheering mean? Quite simple, said the breeder with the scar. You see, when questions are unanswered and there is no humor, the messages become terminal creeds, and the good hunters and breeders here seek nothing that is terminal. Terminal creeds are terminal diseases, and we celebrate when death is inevitable.

The families smiled when she stood to tell them how much she loved their enthusiasm. In your smiling faces I can see myself, she said. This is a good place to be, you care for the living. The hunters and breeders cheered again.

But you applaud her narcissism, said the bishop to the breeder with the scar. His hands were folded in a neat pile on the table. She has demanded that we see her narcissism, said the breeder. You heard her tell us that she did not like questions, views; she is her own victim, a terminal believer.

But we are all victims.

The histories of tribal cultures have been terminal creeds and narcissistic revisionism, said the breeder. The tribes were perfect victims: if they had more humor and less false pride, the families would not have collapsed under so little pressure from the white man. . . . Show me a solid culture that disintegrates under the plow and the rifle and the saw.

Token White pounded on the table.

Pink Stallion stopped for a few minutes, looked around the table at the students, and then continued reading in a much louder voice to the end of the stories.

Your views are terminal.

Who is serious about the perfections of the past? Who gathers around them the frail hopes and febrile dreams and tarnished mother earth words? asked the hunter with the scar. Surviving in the present means giving up on the burdens of the past and the cultures of tribal narcissism.

Belladonna nibbled at her sugar cookie like a proud rodent. Her cheeks were filled and flushed. Her tongue tingled from the tartness of the cookie. In the kitchen the cooks had covered her cookie with a granulated time release alkaloid poison that would soon dissolve. The poison cookie was the special dessert for narcissists and believers in terminal creeds. She was her own perfect victim. The hunters and breeders have poisoned dozens of terminal believers in the past few months. Most of them were tribal people.

Fine Print cursed white people.

Token White strummed the sinew on her bow.

Belladonna nibbled at the poison dessert cookie, her polite response to the enthusiasm of the people who lived behind the wall. She smiled and nodded to the hunters and breeders who all watched her eat the last crumb.

The sun dropped beneath the great red earthen wall when the pilgrims passed through the gate. The pilgrims were silent, walking through the shadows. Seven crows circled until it was dark. Belladonna was chanting her words. My father took me into the sacred hills. We started when the sun was setting because Old Winter Catcher had to know what the setting sun looked like before he climbed into the hills for the night. The sun was beautiful; it spread great beams of orange and rose colors across the heavens. My father said it was a good sunset. No haze to hide the stars. He said it was good, and we climbed into the hills. It feels like that time now; we are climbing into the hills for the visions of the morning.

We walked up part of the hill backward, Belladonna said with her head turned backward. Then he told me that the world is not as it appears to be frontward, not then, not now. To leave the world and to see the power of the spirit on the hills we had to walk out of the known world backward. We had to walk backward so nothing would follow us up the hill.

My father said that things that follow are things that demand attention. Do you think we are being followed now?

No, said Bishop Omax Parasimo, looking behind.

When I do this we are walking and talking into the morning with Old Winter Catcher, she said, walking and talking backward down the road: *noitnetta ruo no sdnamed on htiw gninrom otni emoc ot tsrif eht*

Fast Food asked for a translation.

the first to come into morning with no demands on our attention

Shaman High smelled of wild flowers and bears and landfill swill when the teaching trickster stopped his stories, and then soared backward out the window in the darkness and laughed ha ha ha haaaa over the mountains and familiar tribal faces on the woodland water moons.

Pink Stallion removed his reading glasses, bundled his books and papers under his arm, laughed ha ha ha haaaa, and then walked backward from the seminar table in the resource center through tribal fantasies and backward through the whirr and rattle of windmills, backward from the present to his appointment with a blonde in his office next door.

The windmills whirred.

Backward through the door he slammed the door.

The windmills whirred.

The students and mythic memories from the stories hunkered out of time near the thin wall and waited to hear the familiar pleasure moans and sex sounds of the Pink Stallion mounting the resurrection of General George Armstrong Custer in the office next door. The Little Bighorn loomed in primal dreams of tribal vengeance.

The windmills whirred while the students shared new trickeries and terminal resurrections and turned from their remembered past to mount the blondes on campus for the last ride home.

Wild Intervention

ESCAPED TIGER KILLS MAN IN TBILISI

A man was killed by a tiger who escaped from a zoo in the city of Tbilisi, Georgia. The tiger was one of seven who escaped from the zoo following severe flooding in the former Soviet republic. In addition to the tigers, eight lions and three jaguars escaped from the zoo but eventually perished in the flooding.

Source: Vice News

NORTH CAROLINA TEENS INJURED IN SHARK ATTACK

Two North Carolina teenagers were attacked by sharks while swimming near Oak Island. Each victim lost an arm in the attack, one of several that have happened recently. Biologists were quick to proclaim that such attacks are quite rare stating that ". . . having a series of injuries so close to each other in time and space makes this unusual." They speculated that "it might suggest a single shark has been involved."

Source: CNN

ADDITIONAL SHARK ATTACKS IN THE CAROLINAS

Just a few weeks after biologists described shark attacks as being quite rare, three additional individuals were attacked. A 17-year old received injuries to his right calf, buttocks, and hands while swimming at Cape Hatteras National Sea Shore. A day earlier, a 47-year old swimming in the same area was bitten on his right leg and back. That day a man was attacked by a shark at South Carolina's Hunting Island State Park as well.

Source: CNN

BISON ATTACKS WOMAN ATTEMPTING SELFIE

A 43-year old woman was attacked by a bison at Yellowstone National Park while attempting to take a selfie. The woman and her daughter—who were standing 6 yards from a bison—turned her back on the animal and tried to take a photo with it. According to the National Park Service, "They heard the bison's footsteps moving toward them and started to run, but the bison caught the mother on the right side, lifted her up, and tossed her with its head." The woman was the fifth person this year injured by bison at Yellowstone and the third to be injured while attempting to take a photo with the animals.

Source: CNN

TEXAS MAN SHOOTS AT ARMADILLO, WOUNDED BY RICOCHET

An East Texas man was wounded after he fired a gun at an armadillo in his yard and the bullet ricocheted back to hit him in his face, the county sheriff said on Friday. Cass County Sheriff Larry Rowe said the man, who was not identi fied, went outside his home in Marietta, southwest of Texarkana, at around 3 a.m. on Thursday morning. He spotted the armadillo on his property and opened fire. The animal's hard shell deflected at least one of three bullets, which then struck the man's jaw, he said. The man was airlifted to a nearby hospital, where his jaw was wired shut, according to Rowe. The status of the animal is unknown.

CHIMP ATTACKS DRONE

In April, a chimp at the Royal Burgers' Zoo in the Netherlands swatted a camera-laden drone, knocking it out of the air. A television crew was hoping to use the drone to film chimps at the zoo. However, as soon as they started using the drone, chimps began collecting branches, positioned themselves strategically, and subsequently attacked the drone. The journal Primates studied the incident and concluded with the obvious: the attack was intentional.

Source: Christian Science Monitor

GOLFER DIES FROM BEE ATTACK

A 64-year old man playing golf at a northern Michigan resort died after being attacked by a swarm of bees while looking for a ball in the woods. The man was stung more than 20 times on the head, neck, and shoulders at Treetops Resort in Dover Township according to Michigan State Police Sergeant Mark Tamlyn.

Source: Reuters

CHIMPS AREN'T THE ONLY ANIMALS ATTACKING DRONES

The blog Schneier on Security has noted the proliferation of animal attacks on the drones and the subsequent posting of videos of the attacks on YouTube. com. Among the animals attacking drones are ravens, hawks, geese, and kangaroos. One attack by a ram disabled a drone, and when the operator went to retrieve it, the ram attacked the man flying the drone.

Source: Schneier on Security

BEAR SELFIES CAUSE COLORADO PARK TO CLOSE

A Denver, Colorado-area park was closed over concerns that visitors would be injured while attempting to take selfies. Brandon Ransom, manager of recreation at the park, reported that he has "seen people using selfie sticks to try and get as close to the bears as possible, sometimes within 10 feet of wild bears." The park's operators were concerned that people would be unable to resist bothering the bears in order to get the perfect Instagram shot.

Source: CNET

Reviews

Dixie Be Damned

By Neal Shirley & Saralee Stafford
AK Press • 280 pages • May 2015

Dixie Be Damned: 300 Years of Insurrection in the American South is the product of years of research by the folks who brought us the North Carolina Piece Corps, a zine distro with a focus on hidden tales of southern revolt and contemporary stories exploring the theoretical acceptance of violence. Pamphlets such as "*Politicians Love Gun Control*", "*I Will Not Crawl*" (excerpts from Robert F. Williams' *Negroes With Guns*), and "*Piece Now, Peace Later*" draw upon histories of struggle where the debate around violence and arms has played a pivotal role in either emboldening rebels who accept what is now referred to as a diversity of tactics or disempowering those who walk the line of pacifism. In my early years of being an anarchist, I considered myself a pacifist and ideologically found myself against the use of arms, mostly due to my fear of them and misunderstanding of the use of violence. "*Politicians Love Gun Control*" shook my political foundations and encouraged the sentiments that had already begun pushing me toward anarchy.

When I was initially approached by one of the authors to write a review of the book for *Black Seed*, I expected that it would be a stretch to try to relate a book of rebellious Southern history to a journal of green anarchy. I was wrong. I found this book at once to be an attack on popular notions of progress and history that, although permeating throughout radical histories, lend themselves to the story of civilization just the same. *Dixie Be Damned* features stories of outcasts and runaways who formed bands to attack plantation and slave society. Notably, they retreated to seemingly uninhabitable swamps and forests that could not be traversed by those who would hunt them down. It is the close ties to these "unforgiving" lands that give these rebels the upper hand in combating militarily superior forces, and it is this dependence on land that the State uses to crush its opposition by way of creating new ways to govern and harvest these lands.

Yet, a hole in these stories, specifically that of the Ogeechee Insurrection and the chapter on the Lowry Gang, must be addressed, considering that what is being discussed is a history of revolt against empire and colonization. The topic of indigenous people in the region goes hardly addressed throughout the entire book. Who were the indigenous people of this area? What were their names, and where did they live? What were their roles in any of these histories? The chapter on the Ogeechee Insurrection pays lip service to this topic, and the histories of the Lowries are explored only insofar as it paints a story of cross-racial solidarity, like when white store-owners bought obviously stolen arms and ammunition from runaway slaves or how the Lowries themselves seemed to be a tribe of castaways and escapees with an incredibly mixed background (runaway slaves, colony deserters, survivors of Indigenous genocide, etc). For a collection of histories that begins with the colonization of North America and that borrows terminology from Marx (albeit altered with Silvia Federici's expansion of "primitive accumulation"), I expected those stories to be highlighted more.

Another reoccurring theme throughout the book is the unusual blending of spiritual practices that unite large groups of rebels and furthermore instill a sense of cultural belonging across a large mix of identities and backgrounds. From the chapter "A Subtle Yet Restless Fire: Attacking Slavery from the Dark Fens of the Dismal Swamp":

> "The spiritual messengers were an opaque force, unregistered and unmarked by plantation society, but highly respected by slaves and maroons alike. Their religious orientation varied greatly, ranging from Christian Methodism to a variety of traditional West African folk spiritual practices and magic. These practices had evolved for over a hundred years in the Great Dismal Swamp, resulting in the blending of the strange mixture of Quaker ideas and Indian religion that had come earlier, with the spiritism and mysticism of more recent Black maroons." (pg. 43)

Spirituality has been a topic that *Black Seed* has made attempts to bring up in each issue, and this story brings up one such reason why I personally think it's an important conversation. Although the context can be seen as differing greatly from where anarchists and antagonists orient themselves presently, the lesson to be learned here is that there was a widespread acceptance of varying spiritual practices, and those practices had much to do with harboring a culture of attack and resistance to plantation society. In one example, songs were sung to portray and encourage feelings of revolt. In "Ogeechee 'Til Death: Expropriation and Communization in Low Country Georgia":

> "The songs were sung mostly in the present tense, with urgency. As Peter Linebaugh interprets, jubilee songs proclaim 'Now is the time. It is not a question of time being ripe, or of objective circumstances being ready.'"(pg. 77)

As an anarchist, I am more interested in how these beliefs, practices, origin, stories, and cultures can play a role in entire lives of revolt. The prominent early theorists of anarchism were arguably atheistic and eager to put down religion entirely in favor of a scientific-progressivism. While these sentiments may have led to a critique of institutionalized spirituality and religion, and rightly so, what would a rebellious spirituality look like? Looking back, we can see examples, and perhaps piece together elements that make sense to ourselves, individually. Furthermore, how would one do this without simply just stealing cultural identifiers from those in rebellion? I'm not interested in tracing a lineage of blood and ancestry to establish a legitimacy in who is allowed to practice what spiritualties, but how does one pick up a torch that was put down so long ago?

Another critique I have of this book relates to the definition of an insurrectionary activity. Numerous times throughout the book, too many to count, partisans of revolt and rebellion, acts of sabotage and attack, are all referred to under the umbrella of insurrection or insurrectionary. It left me with the question, who is an insurrectionary? What is classified as an insurrectionary act? In my understanding, an insurrectionary is not just simply someone who carries out an attack against physical manifestations of capitalism and politics, but someone who believes in a specific practice and theory of anarchism. And an insurrectionary act is not just any attack or uprising against a physical manifestation of the currently standing social order, but one that does not wait for the ripe moment or the correct amount of participants and acts on the basis of

the need for attack. Often throughout the text, the term *insurrection* is used to identify a months-long coordination or build-up of antagonism that leads to a great calamity of what I would refer to as a rebellion, while those who participated are referred to as "insurrectionaries." Through reading all of the stories presented in this book, it became easy to see that this word had become a catch-all term for any of the activities the authors wished to write about. Does writing an "anarchist-historiography" differ really so much from other histories, painting stories from the past with the brush we would like to see them with? The authors have set out to ask and perhaps even answer an impossible question, an effort I truly enjoy and hope to participate in myself.

Black and Green Review No. 1

Black And Green Press • 128 Pages

Kevin Tucker, best known for his *Species Traitor* journals and regular appearances on John Zerzan's *Anarchy Radio*, released a new journal this year called *Black & Green Review (BAGR)*. Having been largely without new Kevin Tucker writings since 2005, I was excited to hear about *Black & Green Review*. As soon as I could, I ordered a bunch of copies for my local infoshop and eagerly began flipping through one. I loved Kevin's writing style in the early 2000s as I was beginning to question civilization and technology, and I still do today, but much in his new publication falls short.

The main problem with *BGR* is that it's exactly what you would expect it to be. From the voices (Kevin Tucker and John Zerzan, among others who share their style), to the moralistic calls-to-action, to a tired glorification of hunter/gatherer ways of life, *BGR* is simply more of the same. The dream of the '90s is alive in *Black & Green Review*. It's difficult to say something new, to push the conversation further or in a different direction. As a *Black Seed* editor, I was a part of many conversations in which we asked ourselves over and over again "do we really have anything new to say?" We deliberated throughout the process of producing our first issue, trying to articulate the gap that we knew existed in green anarchist publishing. Since the end of *Green Anarchy* in 2008, there hadn't been a large–print–run green anarchist periodical, though there was a slew of interesting projects. We were trying to make sure that we weren't just making something simply because we could. It's hard to know whether we successfully avoided this pitfall. When *Black Seed* Issue 1 was published, I heard that it was received badly by Kevin Tucker. Because his rants mostly took place on Facebook, I heard about them second hand, but boy, did I hear about them, and from several sources. *Black and Green Review* was Kevin Tucker's response to what he percieves as *Black Seed*'s shortcomings.

Beginning with the opening editorial, Kevin reveals himself to be majorly out-of-touch with contemporary green anarchist publishing. His first paragraph ends with the statement, "things have been awfully silent lately." Aside from not mentioning *Black Seed* as a new green anarchist publication (which I tried not to take personally), Kevin had to overlook nearly all other projects, writings, and gatherings to make such a statement. *Desert*, published in 2011, turned much green and ecologically-focused anarchist thought on its head by asking what many feared to ask: "what if the collapse doesn't come?" Then there's the Dark Mountain project, a network of writers and artists who came together in 2009, attempting to use their media to grapple with questions about civilization and collapse. You can find an excerpt of their manifesto in our last issue. While Kevin (and probably most readers of *Black Seed*) have a bone to pick with organized religion, he of all

people, having been interviewed by them, should be well aware of the multiple editions of *In the Land of the Living: a Journal of Anarcho-Primitivism and Christianity* that have been produced in the last decade. And what of the *Bædan* journal? Issue Two in particular brings sources together into a coherent critique of gender-as-domestication previously unseen. His assertion of silence on the part of anti-civilization thinkers is not only insulting and inaccurate, but I believe it also sheds light on Tucker's bias. These are but a few examples; the theories related to green anarchy have been far from silent. Much anti-civilization thought has been put to paper in the last decade, it just hasn't been the kind that Kevin likes.

Anyone reading *Black Seed* knows that we are far more interested in asking questions than in claiming to have answers. That said, I appreciated the question at the end of *BGR*'s introduction: "how do we have discussions again that matter?" I want to know that too! Reading that as the project's purpose gives me a bit of hope that we may be complementary publications to some degree. I have my roots in anarcho-primitivism. I am largely sympathetic to anarcho-primitivism as a critique and take rewilding pretty seriously as a practice. I'm a sucker for that shit. So, when I read the main essay in *BGR*, "The Suffocating Void," I was immediately drawn in by Kevin's take on the effects of social media. I found myself underlining things, writing notes in the margins, getting excited about distancing myself from technology in a way that reminded me of when I first read Ellul, or Mumford, or Mander. As the piece wore on, however, I began asking myself something: was I excited because Kevin was saying something truly new here? Was he pushing his ideas to places they'd never gone before? Or was I simply reliving the same feelings I'd had while reading Mumford, who wrote *Civilization and Technics* in 1934, or Mander, who wrote *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* in 1978? It's not that I think these works are irrelevant—quite the opposite—I would that everyone read them. My point is that "The Suffocating Void" says nothing new, but is written as though it has the answers. Old ideas are important, as is synthesizing these ideas for a new audience; I largely agree with what Kevin is saying. Anything written in such grandiose terms, however, should have something groundbreaking to say. Sure, it updates the language, replacing the "automation" and "screens" of Mander and Mumford with social media and smartphones, but the argument remains the same. Yes, I think our generation faces a new and different attachment to technology; yes, I want as many reminders and cautions as I can take; yes, I want suggestions on obtaining that critical distance necessary for critique. However, "The Suffocating Void" came up short for me in these regards, not to mention at times erring on the side of sounding conspiratorial in its constant reference to "the domesticators." Just who are the ones doing the domesticating? Though we resist, are we not complicit?

Later in the journal, an essay by Four-Legged Human entitled "The Commodification of Wildness and its Consequences" left me with a bad taste in my mouth. In an attempt to elucidate the ways commodification pervades modern society, FourLegged Human ends up targeting pastoralists and poachers, seeming to blame them rather than acknowledging that survival in the modern economy has necessitated the abandonment of traditional ways of life for most of us on the globe, himself included. It's easy for us, whose societies were colonized in the distant past, to point the finger at those people for whom commodification is a recent development, but it's also quite hypocritical. Do I think it's awful that people are poaching rhino horns rather than living in hunter/gatherer bliss? Of course I do, but what if instead of filling their article with examples from around the world the author instead filled it with examples from their own life? The entire thing came off as more than a little-self righteous to me.

Probably the strongest piece is Autumn Leaves Cascade's "To Rust Metallic Gods." The piece details Western paganism from the Neolithic to present-day neo-paganism and Wicca. Not only is it well written and extremely detailed for such a short essay, it somehow combines historical detail with a personal tone and realistic suggestions obviously gleaned from the author's own practice. And you have to love an essay ending with the pithy epithet: "for ruins, not runes." I highly recommend it to anyone struggling with the pull of getting in touch with their European pagan roots. It's relevant especially in light of the conversations we've been having in *Black Seed* about spirituality with pieces like "Childhood, Imagination, and the Forest" and "The Continuing Appeal of White Nationalism."

Upon first picking up *BGR* and skimming through it, I think I gave a vocal "ugh" when seeing an article titled "The Ferguson Insurrection." Everyone has to have something to say about Ferguson, and most of the ones doing the theorizing are far removed from the action or the realities leading up to it. It's not that I think Ferguson is irrelevant, it's that so many people who were there—or who are closely connected to that struggle— have written thoughtful essays on their experiences. The pamphlets "Guns, Cars, Autonomy" and "No, We Won't Go Home" come to mind. If you'd like to zoom out and see Ferguson in a more theoretical light, I'd recommend checking out afro-pessimist thinker Frank Wilderson's interview, "We're Trying to Destroy the World," available on audio and in print. *Black Seed* has been silent on this subject. That silence may not have been the best approach (I believe it wasn't), but perhaps we were silent out of a fear of doing exactly what Kevin Tucker did: again, saying something for the sake of saying it.

I was and am still excited that Kevin Tucker is putting together *Black and Green Review*. I can only hope that through this project he finds a way to connect with those outside his insular anarcho-primitivist circle. First issues aren't easy, and I look forward to reading Issue Two, which should be out by the time this article is published.

On Killing the Undead: Issues 1 and 2 of Post-Scarcity Anarchism

Post-Scarcity Economics
postscarcityeconomics.wordpress.com
Issue 1: 33 pages • Issue 2: 31 pages

For some, Murray Bookchin was simply never relevant. Whether for his zany yet boringly liberal mix of ecological concern and technological optimism, his bizarre obsession with Classical Athenian democracy, his cantankerous screed *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, or his late-life and ressentiment-fueled (yet entirely appropriate) eschewing of the label anarchist; some anarchists (including this one) never found Bookchin's ideas to have much life to them from the start. For many more, Bookchin was pushed further into the grave when he was taken to task by a number of anti-left or anti-civilization thinkers, including Dave Foreman, John Zerzan, and (most amusingly and thoroughly) Bob Black. One might have hoped that the man's actual death would mean the end of such utterances as "The modern tractor . . . is a work of superb mechanical ingenuity. . . . Large tractors . . . are likely to have air-conditioned cabs."[1]

But with the irritating tenacity of a revenant, he keeps rising from the dead. Bookchin's ideas received a shot in the arm with the recent militant actions of the PKK (The Kurdistan Work-

[1] Bookchin, Murray. "Towards a Liberatory Technology".

ers' Party), whose leader Abdullah Öcalan, after decades of armed struggle against the Turkish state, recently has begun advocating for a "Democratic Confederalism," drawing heavily on the Bookchin he has been reading while incarcerated. And Bookchinism has subsequently received what appears to be some youthfully exuberant theoretical engagement from the authors and editors of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (PSA), with its insipid and revealing subtitle: *Influenced by Social Ecology*.

Being "influenced" apparently means depicting your patriarch in proud portraiture within the first two pages of both issues, coupled with reprinting his "What is Social Ecology?" in the first. This essay is seemingly meant as a framing piece for the first issue, if not the zine in general. With the laboriousness of tossing anvils, Bookchin devotes four paragraphs—more than half of the piece—to ensuring his apparently wide-eyed and unwashed reader grasps the elusive notion that social and ecological problems are related. It was a finding revealed through the subtleties of the dialectic, I am told. Undoubtedly groundbreaking in 1993—having been preceded only by Fredy Perlman, Chellis Glendinning, Voltairine DeCleyre, the aforementioned John Zerzan and Bob Black, the anthropologists Marshall Sahlins and Richard Borshay Lee…—the piece can only have appreciated in the twenty-two years since. More excitingly, a review of the piece primes the reader to appreciate the awe-inspiring power of sneer/scare quotes employed liberally by Bookchin, including, inexplicably, on one of his own arguments. The zine's authors will follow their forefather's tendencies toward irrelevance and poor writing: an enthusiastic sophomorism shines forth throughout the two issues via technological naïvité; creepily systematized prefiguration; trumpeting moralism; and an abundance of misspellings, punctuation errors, and incoherent phrases.

For people pushing a highly-organized, rational, and technopostivistic society, the *PSA* crowd appears awfully lacking in editorial oversight. The zines have a we-finished-it-at-4-AM-after-four-cupsof-coffee-and-a-couple-of-beers feel, with redundant, incoherent, or tautological sentences like "Anti-authoritarian collective property is a way of collectively managing that which is used by a collective in a non-authoritarian way." There are commas at the end of sentences and misspellings like "comradery." Exceeding Bookchin, sneer quoting is taken to its apotheosis, a practice beyond mockery that becomes reflected back on itself and collapses into total incoherence, as when one PSA author references "capitalism's 'dismal' history" and "disgusting 'entrepreneurs.'" Do the authors want to imply to us that capitalism's history is in fact illustrious, that the good name of entrepreneurship is being sullied by a few bad apples?

Moreover, the PSAs more than once play the part of the ingénue, presenting information or making suggestions that are appallingly naïve or inaccurate. One author, citing NASA and the UN, introduces them as "politically un-biased [sic] entities that merely collate data and information"—in a genuinely baffling statement, attempts at the expansion of capitalism beyond the planet Earth and the hegemony of economic globalism and nation-states are presented as politically neutral by a collective of anarchists (or is it "anarchists"?).

Similarly, another author opines that the "Featured PSA Project" of aquaponics[2] will provide a "closed loop, sustainable system that continuously *produces food forever, for free* [emphasis added]." They style this iteration of agriculture a "living ecosystem"; as opposed to the dead rivers,

[2] Aquaponics is a discipline of agriculture. The word is a portmanteau of aquaculture, the husbandry of aquatic animals, and hydroponics, the soil-less cultivation of plants in nutrient solutions. In aquaponics, these organisms are placed into a simulated, simple mutualism by allowing the excretions of the animals to feed the plants, who in turn ensure the animals are not poisoned by their own shit.

ponds, and wetlands, I suppose, living ecosystems are made with LED lights, plastic tubs, and glass houses. I would like to charitably assume that the PSA crew, with their techno-optimism, have considerably more technical/engineering knowledge than an anti-civilization wingnut like me (my computer might as well be powered by alchemically-bound machine spirits for all I know); but statements like this one read like parodies of technological religiosity. Plastics, electricity, rare earth metals, and so forth apparently drop from heaven, limitless and without the consequences of toxicity, drudgery, and land despoliation.

The author goes so far as to boast that although one might normally associate agriculture with "healthy soil, and lots of space for sunlight" (rather than topsoil loss and CAFOs[3], apparently), aquaponics "utilizes our understanding of nature[?] to allow the growth of plants without the need for sunlight or even soil." Such an alienated, humanist understanding of the Good is surely the stuff of Bookchin's conception of "the ecological use of technology" to "make man's dependence upon the natural world a visible and living part of his culture."[4] The human organism, a walking elaboration of soil and sunlight, sighs with relief as it can finally use its "liberatory" (I can't stop myself from using them now—it's so much easier than actually making arguments!) technology to put those tiresome things behind it. But perhaps I am expecting too much from people who self-reportedly "comprehend the emergent nature of our understanding of the natural world,"—they are, after all, presently fixated on comprehending *their understanding of the world*, which appears to be a rather poor one; they may think less reverently of aquaponics once they work toward comprehending *the world itself*. To be fair, I am struggling to comprehend their understanding of the world, too!

Only pages away is a paean to wave energy generators, again embraced utterly uncritically in spite of extant evidence that their installation entails "tremendous disturbance to the seabottom sediments" that "would result in the loss of habitats for marine infauna" and their generation of electromagnetic fields during operation results in "decreases in fertility of marine animals, . . . interference with migration and navigation, detection of prey or escape from predator, [and] chronic negative impacts that influence organism growth and/or reproduction."[5] Again, we see the belief that merely exorcising the demon of capitalism somehow redeems the industrial body.

It is implied in the way the *PSA* collective offhandedly say that they "aren't much concerned with precisely what shade of green [their] politics is [sic]" that they perhaps care only somewhat what the collateral damage is of achieving Bookchin's neurotic fantasy of portable, personal, self-creating factories.[6] Indeed, in a part of the "Glossary" section I had to read twice to confirm it was not a joke, there is a suggestion that the dream is now realized with the advent of 3D printers, which are hailed as a way to avoid "pay[ing] some money-grubbing capitalist for cheap plastic crap from China." Anarchy means you make your own cheap plastic crap, presumably so that you may identify with it more completely; I assume the alienation dissipates at some point when the self-creating factories are sufficiently widespread so as to become unnoticeable. Of course,

[3] Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations are one of the nightmarish manifestations of modern agriculture in which domesticated animals are concentrated in incredible densities and kept alive only through such grotesque measures as regular doses of antibiotics and antihelminthics and the creation of anaerobic lagoons, literally artificial ponds for their shit to fill.

[4] Ibid., Bookchin.

[5] Lin, Lan and Yu, Haitao, "Offshore wave energy generation devices: Impacts on ocean bio-environment." *Elsevier*, Acta Ecologica Sinica 32 (2012), pp. 117-122.

[6] Ibid., Bookchin.

an alienated, humanist project is exactly what the thankfully obscure *PSA* crowd is pushing, and they toss some anvils your way, "What is Social Ecology?"-style, to ensure this comes across unambiguously. We are told of a "universal humanistic conscience (what we know to be right and wrong) [sic]" that should be our guiding principle. I am still trying to locate this conscience so that I can have a listen too; perhaps I should contact NASA to see if they are willing to apolitically share any date they have collated on whether it is hanging about in the upper atmosphere somewhere. Though the *PSA* crowd do not say it explicitly, the invisible humanist amoeba that engulfs us all preaches utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is a subset of consequentialism, a set of ethics with a very long and rich history in Western philosophy. Put succinctly, consequentialists argue that the goodness or badness of an action should be judged only by the consequences of that action (rather than the nature of the action itself, the intentionality of the actor, the character of the persons involved, etc.); in the case of utilitarianism specifically, the best action is considered to be the one that maximizes collectively aggregate happiness, pleasure, or wellbeing and minimizes suffering. Casual and aphoristic ways of expressing these ideas are everyday phrases like "the ends justify the means," "we need to think about the common good," or "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." Utilitarianism has been taken up by radicals, including anarchists, many times as justification for radically restructuring the world. The *PSA* crowd reveal themselves, however wittingly is unclear, as the latest in this tradition when they make statements like "[our] goal is maximizing wellbeing [sic] of all."

A full critique of utilitarianism is very far outside this review's scope, so I will confine myself to this pithy one. Thoroughgoing utilitarian decision-making would mean that the proper person would be constantly employing a hedonic calculus, going from this moment to that while trying to quantitatively maximize good times for the collective. Sentient beings take on the appearance of shifting clusters of pleasure and pain units, each contributing a small part to a net gain that must be pursued. Though more sophisticated utilitarians have acknowledged that the quality, and not merely the quantity, of experiences is important, the focus on numeralization and maximization remains intact, only elaborated.

This system is thus the gaze of the bureaucrat, reductionist and managerial, treating beings as fungible and experiences as standardizable. Besides the depersonalization and flattening of affect inherent in such a gaze, I find revolting any ethical system that would label my times of pain, sorrow, and despair as objectively negative and to be avoided at all costs, as I consider these to have been at least as enriching to my life as those of positive affect. It is unsurprising that the originator of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham, was, among progressive/liberal pursuits, a legal scholar and a prison designer.

The PSAs gift us with a glimpse of what a concrete implementation of this moralist, technopositivist, urban, and globalized society might look like. In typical I-promise-we-can-manage-the-world-better fashion, the essay "Anti-Authoritarian Property Relations" (featuring the silly tautological sentence quoted above) begins with a nice promise that widespread adoption of PSA philosophy will mean universal wealth coupled with relief from labor, all of which will be non-authoritarian in its administration. Perhaps skeptical, we are assured that the negativity of authority is really only the product of specific institutional frameworks—like formal, top-down decision-making—and can therefore be addressed through a different formalization. By way of example, we are asked to consider the apparently harmless authority residing in relationships with "a teacher, a parent, an [sic] or an expert," of which we of course have only fond memories. Such hand-waving complete, it is only a short leap to the assertion that "collectives remain

non authoritarian [sic] by practicing participatory democracy." Again, a thoroughgoing critique of democracy is beyond this essay's scope (though I can certainly recommend Bob Black's "Debunking Democracy" for this purpose), so let this little one suffice. Democracy, ungenerously described, is the political idea that one should or should not do what most people tell them to do or not do—it is thus nakedly authoritarian in its raw form. It is, moreover, an "affair of worriers,"[7] a neurotic obsession with formal process as the gateway to liberation. Sophisticated enough to recognize these obvious issues, the PSAs assure us that they have evaded them, as "everyone retains self-management within the association and is free to leave the association at any time."

Free to leave, sure, but to go where? The PSAs imagine a world totally federated, agricultural, and industrial on a scale comparable to if not in some ways greater than what we have now. What place is there for those who do not want to be agricultural industrialists, who do not want a compulsory moral system? What about those for whom anarchy means living in very small groups, or even alone, and as part of their local ecology? The PSAs exalt wave energy generators and wind power as though these systems have not historically and are not presently destroying indigenous lifeways and contributing to toxicity. The benign face of participatory, sustainablity-oriented democracy is capable of the same assimilationist and expansionist tendencies as the more obviously ruthless one we inhabit now. Indeed, the PSAs promise us in their world there would be "rules without rulers," "which doesn't mean no authorities," and "graduated sanctions for rule violators," including "non-authoritarian rehabilitation or restraint" and "non-authoritarian therapy". Promulgating ideology is all in the naming, you see—if you say "non-authoritarian" one hundred times before bed each night, you will be free.

But what is most disappointing about these zines is not their crypto-authoritarianism or their seemingly non-existent editing—it is that the editors appear to have chosen to be in dialogue with their critics and contemporaries almost not at all. Aside from a few derisive jokes about anarcho-primitivism and libertarianism, the only anarchists they address in any circumspect way are CrimethInc., toward whom they give a familiar (and very Bookchinist) criticism of their alleged lifestylism (goddamn privileged kids personalistically dropping out) and some applause for moving away from it more recently. Much of what I critique them for here—the PSAs' moralism, humanism, democratism, and techno-optimism—is not new flak for Social Ecology, as I indicated above; I am merely specifying it to this particular articulation. But Bookchin's ghost struts about as though almost unaware of these issues.

A serious and good faith effort to revive Social Ecology would involve some response, or at least some recognition, of post-left, anarcho-primitivist, and other criticisms that have been fielded and to which there has yet to be an adequate response. Where is their defense of urbanism, organizationalism, mass movements, green energy, or democracy? Anarchist critiques of all of these are widely known, and, if perhaps not widely accepted, are certainly held by an active and significant minority of American anarchists.

So whom do the PSA see as their audience? Certainly, it is not merely the already-converted, given that their "goal is maximizing wellbeing [sic] of all" according to their "biopsychosocialecotechnological [...sic?] model of human behavior." Do they want to inculcate the People to the Right and True path before they are exposed to the defiling influence of anti-left/anti-civ anarchism and so feel no need to address these issues at all? Perhaps the PSAs can indulge me by

[7] The Invisible Committee, "They Want to Oblige Us to Govern. We Won't Yield to That Pressure.", *To Our Friends*. Semiotext(e), 2015.

addressing these questions and critiques in their next issue, or perhaps enough damning questions will amount to the decapitation and mouthful of holy wafers that Bookchin needs to stay in his grave.

— Bellamy Fitzpatrick

> Different people use different priority-setting systems to choose where to plant their spears, with the commonest being the simples - where can I reach and where do I love? For many, the answers to the questions of how and where to defend the wild will be obvious, the local agents of destruction clear, communities roused, places to be occupied available, stuff to be destroyed visible. The thing then is simply to act.
> — *Desert*

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