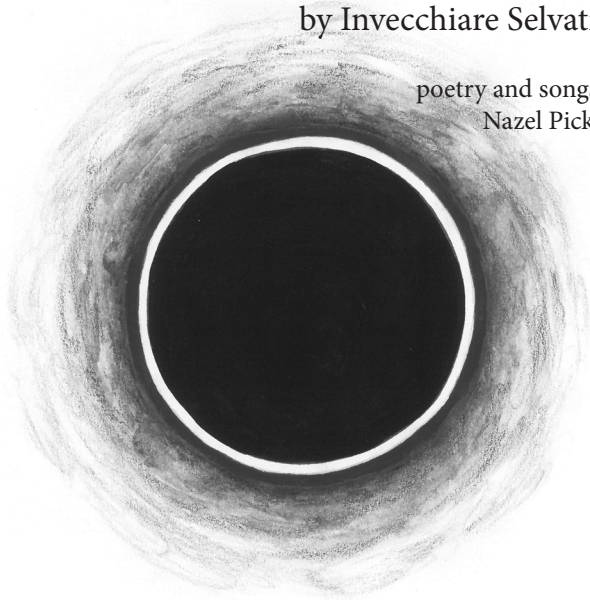


Black Blossoms at the End of the World

by Invecchiare Selvatico

poetry and songs by
Nazel Pickens

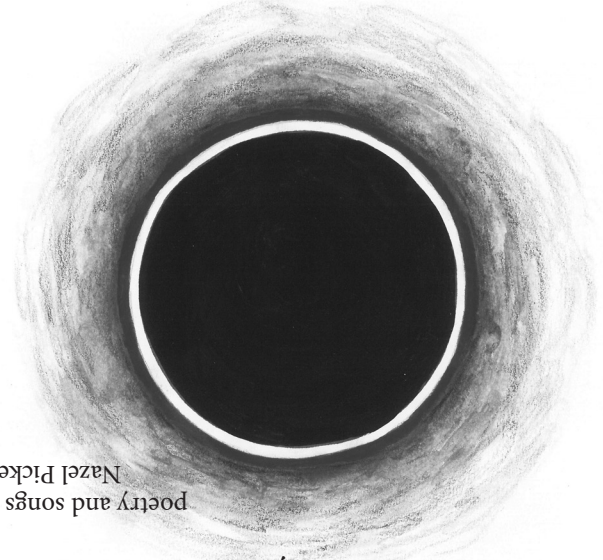


A Compilation of Essays, Fragments, Scribbles,
Letters, Rants, Songs, and Ramblin's Discovered
in a Secluded Backwoods Cabin

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original artwork by Raude

Most of Nazel Pickens' songs appearing in this book are due to be released sometime in 2022, on *Fade To Black*, the second album from The Distilled-Spirit Rebellion, his backwoods cosmic-outlaw band.

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Up Here on the Mountain

As I sit upon this mountain
Scratch my grayin' chin
Can't remember how I got up here
Where else I might've been
But I sure as hell ain't leavin'
Nowhere left to be
So I hold on tight to what I got
Like a sailor out at sea

As I sit upon this mountain
And watch the valley burn
I have to wonder once again
Will fools ever learn
Arrogance and thoughtlessness
The order of the day
Any hope for another world
Seems so far away

Up here on the mountain
High above the town
Up here on the mountain
Watchin' it all go down

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Up here on the mountain
High above the town
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Watchin' it all go down

As I sit upon this mountain
 I watch the walkin' dead
 A thousand scattered thoughts
 Race through my weary head
 'Cause we gave up so goddamn much
 For just a lil' bit
 Endless dreams of possibility
 For a steamin' pile of shit

 As I sit upon this mountain
 Unplugged from their machine
 Livin' life in real-time
 Don't feel too lonely or mean
 Pickin' this old guitar
 Hummin' a forgotten tune
 Sippin' shinin' sour mash
 And a-howlin' at the moon

 Up here on the mountain
 High above the town
 Up here on the mountain
 Watchin' it all go down

 As I sit upon this mountain
 Storms gather, thunder pounds
 Electric light cracks midnight sky
 I hear the age-old sounds

As I sit upon this mountain
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A doe moves through the meadow
Stellar jay cries in the trees
The trickle of our faithful creek
Wind through dried old leaves

As I sit upon this mountain
Lookin' in my daughters' eyes
Just wish there was more down there
Then lies on top of lies
So we live up here each day
With defiant joy and endless love
Down there vultures fight for poisoned flesh
But up here we play like doves

Up here on the mountain
High above the town
Up here on the mountain
Watchin' it all go down

As I sit upon this mountain
At the endin' of the world
Self-righteous prepare for war
Their last banners are unfurled
And even though I am so high
Don't really feel so very tall
Just wish it all came down fast
Not this slow and painful crawl

A doe moves through the meadow
Stellar jay cries in the trees
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Nazel Pickens

As I sit upon this mountain
 With all those for whom I care
 Livin' my last breath of freedom
 With my shotgun and ol' rockin' chair
 And If you come up here for me
 Be ready for a fight
 'Cause as this day is endin'
 So comes a long, long night
 Up here on the mountain
 High above the town
 Up here on the mountain
 Watchin' it all go down!

As I sit upon this mountain
 With all those for whom I care
 Livin' my last breath of freedom
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Up here on the mountain
 High above the town
 Up here on the mountain
 Watchin' it all go down!

Nazel Pickens

Welcome to the Garden of Black Blossoms....

Well, I don't know how you found me and got past the well-protected edges of my unique and distinctly elusive territory, but I assume you know someone I trust, or perhaps, you fell down this particular hole on accident after staring at patterns in clouds or while plotting a particular assassination in your head, but regardless, here you are. Welcome. Feel free to smell the blossoms. Take in their intoxicating bouquet of defiant joyous living and embraced inevitable decay. And please, only pick what you can use.

The following is where I am at, as best as I can articulate right now, within these circumstances and under a wide array of intoxicating spirits. These writings, as with all of my creations, are intended to more deeply understand myself first and foremost. If they help you understand me some, even better. Clarity mixed with open confusion is the process of life that moves me. Maybe we can dance together. Maybe we will be at war. I hope we can engage in vibrant, nuanced, and interesting discussions about this world and our uniquely peculiar lives in it. Most likely, we'll have nothing to do with each other after you read this, or perhaps you will toss it in the trash before getting too far along. And just maybe, it will draw us closer together. Whatever happens, so be it.

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Black Blossoms at the End of the World is a collection of my writings from over the past few years as I reemerged from an extended break from this sort of analytical poetic process. I had fully submerged myself into living rurally and leading a generally more authentic life well over a decade ago, and so had little use for this type of engagement with the world. But as the local anarchist scene developed more intensely, as the larger anarchist world drifted deeper into leftism and technophilia, and as I became more and more frustrated with the world in general, I began to occasionally write these pieces. My primary reason for again putting pen to paper was because many so-called anarchists have followed the trend of reactionary rhetorical hostility towards nuanced discussions, rather than embracing lively and sometimes passionate disagreements. Therefore, my most critical thoughts and feelings remained within a very small crew or in the darkness with my journal.

As one of the primary editors of *Green Anarchy*, I wrote under more than a dozen pennames for various reasons and situations. I enjoy the dance of multiple personalities, characters who all maintain my core yet express different sides and elements while moving in different worlds more easily. Some of those earlier writings may someday be republished as a sequel to this compilation, perhaps entitled “A Bunch of RotN Ideas in *Green Anarchy*”. But for here, I have chosen to mainly stick with one voice, Invecchiare Selvatico, which roughly translates as “growing old

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wildly” from Italian. After reading these pieces, I hope you will understand why I chose this particular name for what may be my final critical thrust in this particular world. It is my clearest voice for this specific form in these times. I maintain a few other voices for other venues, one of whom makes brief appearances in this compilation, Nazel Pickens: the cosmic-anarchist-cowboy who writes and sings rural-centric freedom-lovin’ outlaw poetry and songs. Nazel is also the only voice to occasionally make contact outside of the world of my people and in the virtual hell online. He will pass on any feedback, contacts, and packages, if you don’t wind up on the wrong end of his rusty ol’ gun or his slurrin’ and slanderous tongue.

Black Blossoms at the End of the World began as the essay of that name. It is the grounding of this collection. It was to be my final word to the anarchist world, a world that has mostly disappointed me. Instead, it opened up my well of thoughts pertaining to these times. After some years broken from engagement with the self-described anarchist scene, except for my small band of rural anarcho-deviants, I felt drawn back to add my voice to the dialogue, saddened however that the venues were primarily online, which I have utter disdain for. I began to reignite correspondence with old accomplices in other bioregions, finding that some had continued their war on civilization, the Left, technology, ideology, and other relevant subjects while expanding the discourse in provocative ways, while others, unfortu-

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nately, had stewed in their dogmatic ideologies and had become irrelevant and hostile to those with deepening critique. This incongruence seemed like a place for me to explore my thoughts. I began a few years ago with the essay “Living and Breathing Anarchy: Relationships of the Unique Against Organized Deadness” (published by Enemy Combatant Publications [ECP] in a pamphlet called *Egoist Ecologies*), which struggles with the nature of ideology and the inevitable limitations of singularly-envisioned Egoism, Primitivism, and Hope. From there I explored my nihilistic and misanthropic tendencies in “Cries Against Humanity” (allegedly to someday be published, again by ECP, in a pamphlet entitled *Humans Ruin Everything*) without my previous fear of pushing buttons along these lines, because I no longer really care what moralists and Humanists think, and I needed to say it. The essay “Black Blossoms at the End of the World” was then put together. It is a slightly more formalized and polished presentation of scraps of my notes from various folders and various diaries and notebooks—a less tangential rant, and more descriptive of my general perspective. “Blood Splatters Thicker than Ink” is a letter I wrote to early 20th century anarchist assassin Leon F. Czolgosz, in tribute to him and all those who break through the borders of control—from the physical apparatus of the state to our own self-imposed limitations—to spill the blood of authoritarians. At this point, as COVID-19 set in, my frustrations with anarchists had grown to a fairly toxic

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level, especially as many of them proposed knee-jerk interventions with the current growing social discord, as is discussed in “Are We All in This Together?” (published in *Backwoods* #3). “You Ask Why Cities are Burning” was my ode to those torching cop stations and looting capitalist warehouses and my explanation to those horrified by this fury unleashed after generations (minus my criticisms of most anarchist interventions on the edges of this authentic rebellion). “Can Bricks Break Diametrics?: On Decapitating The Two-Dimensional Binary Thinker” explores the problems of binary thinking and how it is demanded by this world and perpetuated by those who are supposedly against it. Finally, “Their World Is Virtually Done” addresses what I consider the most vital topic of these times, technology and its almost-complete stranglehold on this world, a critique almost completely missing from the reactionary Anti-Fa’ish leftist anarchism of these days. Add to these pieces the various poems, songs, and rants penned by characters of my mixed-up confusion, and you get this compilation of my more recent writings. Many of these pieces were stitched and collaged together from thoughts and fragments in my journal, written in times of clarity, times of confusion, times of frustration, times of rage, times of joy, times of darkness, and times of spirited, mycological- and chemical-induced altered states. I hope they are clear enough to offer points of conversational reference for some, inspiration for a few, and for most, reasons to leave me the fuck alone.

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I would like to thank all those who helped in the process of getting this into your hands, from the physical logistics of making the book, to the inspirations that ignited my love and fury. I invite you to joyous revelries, in profound sorrow, and in unquenched rage, with the Black Blossoms at the End of the World!

revoltingly yours,
Invecchiare Selvatico

Dedicated to Aragorn!

A great friend of mine, who, while I didn't always agree with him, or even understand him, ALWAYS challenged me to go deeper, and who I will always appreciate, love, and remember.

Special Thanks to

John Zerzan, for encouraging me early on to explore my critique against civilization and for remaining a friend, even when our paths diverge
Wolfi Landstreicher, for always reminding me to keep my own unique-self at the center, and for being a true kindred-spirit

Staplecide, my hyper-caFFEinated brother-by-choice and co-conspirator in uncivilized and uncompromising anarchist critique

My Late Night and early morning DIY therapists K and M

LBC for all their hard work on this book and for their uncompromising and continual push for anarchy

... and, of course, to the loving center of my life, Daisy, Cherry, and Cotton, and the rest of my people, my tribe... my true family and friends in our continually new earth

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Stranger

All alone I've been a-ramblin'
A stranger in this world
All my life I've been lookin'
For a diamond or a pearl
I've searched the darkest oceans
Through the deserts of time
But all I ever really found
Was this life of mine

A stranger in a strange land
Shadow in the night
A whisper in the breeze
Blindness in light
Stranger among strangers
Well, we travel and we roam
Like actors on a stage
All together alone

In the shadows of the cities
Through this cold world on my own
Down the highway of wastelands
Never felt like it was home
My restless feet a-movin'
And my thoughts half-blind

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Nazel Pickens

13

Stranger among strangers
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Like actors on a stage
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13

Are We All in This Together?

One of the more troubling slogans expressed during the coronavirus pandemic experience is the empty phrase, “We are all in this together.” We are not. We never were. We never will be.

A perpetual, compulsory, and metastatic “togetherness” is moralistically thrust upon us by an order that needs to push and pull on the tensions of our belonging and our exclusion, as we are bound by an invisible contract that we never signed. It is this conglomerative contraption called society that I reject. I reject its grasp, its requirements, its limitations, its rules, its reasons, its logic, and its aesthetics. I choose with whom and where I connect through authentic affinity and desire. I choose my accomplices in this world. I choose who I live with. I choose who I engage with. I choose who I play with. By that same understanding, I choose who I come into conflict with, who I evade, and who I temporarily negotiate with. For most of the human doings (they *do* more than they *be*) that I may cross paths with in my days, I choose to avoid, be indifferent to, and ignore most of them, especially if our interaction is mediated through constructed venues like social media and pop culture or the falsity of arbitrary community and politics. This is where I am in an over-populated, overwhelmed, and over-reaching reality.

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So be it. I will figure out how to live in defiance and with joy on my own terms and with those I care about. I have had a mostly interesting run thus far and have no intentions to either join their world or give up mine. This is one of many reasons I live mostly off Their radar in the mountains, a tactic long used by outlaws who want no part of Their sick world, but who, rather than turn under in darkness and despair, wish to drink from the sweet and nourishing nectars of life.

It took a significant chunk of my time to get here, at much toil and risk, and admittedly some very limited level of relative privilege, but after a decade and a half of a multifaceted process of diggin' in, I am home. Here, I am trying as honestly and meaningfully as possible to understand, honor, and negotiate what that means in a colonial, genocidal, and postmodern reality, while also being a domesticated and partially broken human, one who attempts to reintegrate into an also very fragmented and damaged ecosystem, without succumbing to others' moralizing agendas and half-thought critiques that are detached from the specific dynamics and circumstances of my life.

This autonomous anti-humanist perspective of mine seems to be unpopular, not just to society as a whole, but even within the so-called anarchist realm. Once again, the divide between communist and individualist makes itself perfectly clear, as well as the obvious chasm between the reformist and the destructionist, the humanist and

the reformist and the destructionist, the humanist and itself perfectly clear, as well as the obvious chasm between the divide between communist and individualist makes but even within the so-called anarchist realm. Once again, mine seems to be unpopular, not just to society as a whole, This autonomous anti-humanist perspective of

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in darkness and despair, wish to drink from the sweet and part of Their sick world, but who, rather than turn under mountains, a tactic long used by outlaws who want no one of many reasons I live mostly off Their radar in the tions to either join their world or give up mine. This is had a mostly interesting run thus far and have no inten-joy on my own terms and with those I care about. I have So be it. I will figure out how to live in defiance and with

(for lack of better explanation) the misanthropic-leaning biocentric tribalist, the hopelessly hopeful and the honestly cynical, the identity-driven and the unique ones, the duty-filled and the free-living. In general, I don't typically have much use for diametrical and binary thinking, but in these regards there is an obvious divergence in paths. I have no apologies for my opinions, no need to discuss their incongruences with others any further, no need to split the difference, no need to pretend I care. I have no duty or guilt or obligation to their world. These diverging paths do not exist on any meaningful common ground. In fact, they are very real enemies. The games of politics fool some into wasting their time and endangering themselves with convoluted and blurry concepts like *solidarity*, *common enemies*, and *unity* or trying to convince others, meeting them halfway, or attempting to subvert their institutions towards something supposedly more egalitarian. This is always a futile goal, but more importantly, it is one which ultimately strengthens the system* in its assimilation of all that it can't marginalize and destroy. The madness is not only in the details, but in the entire motivation. If we keep getting snagged by the fine print we will never run free. Society is our enemy, there are no negotiations or demands, only destruction and escape.

From the beginnings of civilization, those attempting to accumulate and wield power have used shouts of "togetherness" along with the not-always-so-subtle whis-

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pers of exclusion to create their societies. Various precivilized or out-of-contact tribal peoples may have what appears to be a similar dynamic on a much smaller scale, but in their concepts of inclusion and exclusion (to grossly oversimplify) they are informed by authentic face-to-face relationships and by place, outside the abstractions of politics, representations, institutions, and now, the swirling degeneration of compounded and twisted falsity known as technology and, specifically, as social media. In an intact, healthy, functioning, decentralized, place-based tribe, clan, family, leaderless cult*, or whatever you want to call it, there is no need to know if one belongs or not, it is known deeply and intuitively. It is felt. It just is. These dynamics may seem hard to relate to in a post-modern, globalized, technophilic, insanely rational, superficially pluralistic society, but the path is open, maybe even less strenuous than we might think if we let ourselves truly unfold to it. But, it is not possible to honestly open ourselves while we are perpetually entangled in the web of society, tethered to its programs, policed by its politics, and addicted to its methods. We get stuck in the muck of their rules and expectations without even noticing or because of deeply encrusted scar tissue of guilt and duty.

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those of us pushing at all edges differently and allergic to those sandbox fleas who perpetually wait for blood to suck—especially these days when every cause and identity throws their politically-charged myopic landmines under foot at every turn to pull us into their games. All causes and identities are inherently political. It is all struggles for power within a shitpile and only the powerful manipulators and eloquent influencers have a chance. It's dog-eat-dog out there while they want us to believe it could be a walk in the park while we eat our own fecal-flavored treats. No, I'll stay home, but not alone. I still believe we all, individually and in concert with our people, form our own unique dynamics and boundaries from our own desires and tastes. There is nothing larger to get behind, no good fight, no umbrella to shelter all of us, no common thread, no right side. No justice or equality to be had, that's all on their terms, measured with their scales, and on their turf. We live in a junkyard full of factory farm chickens, stool pigeons, feral parakeets, and soaring eagles, all with our own time under the sun, singing our songs, trying to breathe, some of us stretching to hold as much integrity and dignity as we can. We are all trying to live. I chose to live amongst people I have deep affinity with and those I wish to merge my most honest and vulnerable existence with.

Very few of us grew up doing real stuff together, sustaining ourselves within small groups and caring deeply for one another, depending intimately on each other in significant ways. I have deep affinity with and those I wish to merge my most honest and vulnerable existence with.

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icant and vital ways. Most of us grew up as consumers and spectators, addicted to their culture, cogs in their society, told to care about a common good that had nothing to do with us, while encouraged to compete or scheme against our neighbors. Not much has changed, even amongst so-called anarchists who wish to work for social change rather than destroy and escape society. Mindlessly repeating the same activist, civic, and charitable chores while extolling it as mutual aid, forgetting the deep intrinsic relationships needed between people for authentic mutuality. Or, marching alongside those whose ultimate goals are of reforming society to some vague and agenda-driven *justice, equality, accountability, and wokeness*. Again, something only measurable by their terms, not our own. But I have so much more appreciation for, and affinity and interaction with my true daily essentials: the deer trying to munch on the foods and medicines that we grow to feed and sooth myself and loved ones; the mycological forms influencing the soil of our forest garden; the immense and dizzying insect population that keeps a delicate balance; the cedar trees dropping their acidic needles into the spring which provides us the water essential for so many aspects of our lives, (I could go on, fondly, until out of breath), than I do for most humans.

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Probably the most vital and immediate concern for any intimate group, and to a lesser degree its relationships with overlapping and peripheral groups, is food. Just like

every other creature, everything else follows from here. In a state of extreme lack or extreme abundance of food many negative activities and effects occur. These dynamics are for a longer discussion, but the formations of institutions and power over these situations is a key problem. What is clear is that the farther we are from obtaining our own physical nourishment and sustenance, the more alienated, domesticated, and controlled we are, the more enslaved. A primary colonizing tactic is removing peoples from their food connections, and this goes beyond mere physical nourishment. Almost every alternative or deviant grouping wishing to do more than just respond and react to society, but actually live outside it, has understood that unmediated procurement of food (along with medicines, and even intoxicants) is essential. It is why the first activity for most homesteaders is planting seeds, even before building a single structure. In these times, there are a plethora of ways to achieve this, through thoughtful combinations of methods specific to place and the desires of people. Living off-the-grid on the north slope of a forested mountain, my family mostly practices something between permaculture and backyard gardening, with some less-than-sophisticated explorations in forest gardening, foraging, and scavenging. Still dependent on the system for an embarrassing portion of our food, this reliance diminishes significantly each season. We are becoming more autonomous for a number of reasons. First, we understand

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its vitalness. Also, our skills and knowledge are continually increasing through experimentation, study, and knowledge-sharing. We consciously carve out even more time disengaged from the system and its distractions due to our unplugging in various ways (coronavirus didn't hurt these efforts). Most importantly, however, is our growing interdependence with our deeper relations, both on our land and in other nearby kindred spaces. Some in our tight grouping live on land with different dynamics than ours: more sun, larger clearings, other soil types, different elevations and air-flow patterns, even different interests and priorities. This provides for unique opportunities for each site. We can't grow corn or melons at our location, but perennial herbs, greens, brassicas, roots, and most cucurbits and hot weather crops grow fine, and our forest has so very much to offer—like outrageous mycological activity, clean springs, wild foods and medicines, hunting opportunities, wood, and covert space. Over the years, but especially more recently, we have been developing more intricate sharing with others in different unique spaces in this regard that not only help us support each other, but also deepen our connections in shared work, play, and procedures. We don't try to feed society or offer our time and energy to some vague *community*, we feed and nourish each other, our people, in ways that are important to us. This is authentic and anarchistic mutual aid.

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These same dynamics in our food procurement and

sharing can be applied to other needs like shelter, health, protection, child guidance, spirituality, and celebration. What is important to recognize in these situations is that we are always in some phase of transition from domesticated to marginalized to autonomous to free, and all the messy stuff in between. Another key component in this transition is how conflict is negotiated, whether within our group, between our group and friendly overlaps, and between our group and non-friendly groups and society at large. Obviously, the more distant our relationship is, the less time and energy goes into working things out. For consciously unconnected groups, at best, we might have a cold peace or avoidance, with even dishonesty used for our protection, and open conflictual action reserved for specific cases and society at large. This is strategic and based on our needs and desires, not on moral directives to get along or to fight. In the micro, prioritized realm, open honest communication and interaction are essential, without process-oriented sterility. It will look different for each relationship and situation. Remembering to embrace each uniqueness is key to authentic relationships. Conflict will arise, usually from miscommunication in tight-knit groups, but also over genuinely differing opinions. How we deal with these situations say a lot about our connections, whether they are as tight as we perceived, whether we desire them to become tighter, or whether distance is desired. We are all unique, and will hopefully disagree, but

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how we negotiate these disagreements is determined by the qualities of the connection, not a predetermined goal or ideological agenda.

All of this takes time, more time than we will ever have, more time than we can conceive, but time well-spent and never wasted. Hundreds of generations of non-domesticated connections and authentic dynamics cannot be revised or regained overnight or collaged in a post-modern studio. But we can start to think along these lines, embracing both the immediacy of our lives and the slow calm of reintegration into a more authentic life. One way this is most obvious is in what some might call *spirituality* or *inner work*. I have always had a unique spiritual path that might seem outwardly to some as a cynical atheism, though I would never describe it that way. I have always been uncomfortable sharing my intimate unmediated *spiritual* connection to everything outside myself. It seems like language often fails most miserably here. But I also feel that with the deepening of intimate relationships, this might be a natural and needed realm to begin to explore. Being rightfully cynical of any forced ritual or process has often left me outside group practice. I do feel this has been a choice and an outcome that is beginning to change as my deeper trust in a limited few grows. We obviously share very specific views of many things in this world, so it would seem this might flow into, and perhaps emanate from, our “spiritual” realm. I think entering into

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this both with caution and openness, with the first diminishing as the second holds more and more space can only happen in the intimate group over a very long time of deepening exploration. We are only beginning a process that is infinite.

While I feel my life has been an ongoing deepening of relationship with my intentionally intimate crew, tribe, family, leaderless cult, whatever we want to call it, I still attempt to germinate larger circles of affinity and fertilize new relationships. Most of these outward interactions are based on specific projects or goals, a dynamic too limited and utilitarian for my deeper connections. In the context of these peripheral relationships there is a more temporal, elastic, guarded, and superficial nature. The process of experimenting, letting the relationship grow and stretch some, with critical examination on multiple levels and pruning back the unhealthy ones, allows more energy for the healthier and fruitful ones to blend with deeper, already existing relationships. I believe our energies, from actual physical stamina to emotional elements like empathy and love, to have finite properties. There is a diminishing quality the further these relationships are from our authentic self and our life. In a world already tugging and pulling on our energies in so many ways, why would we not attempt to put the most focus where we are at. None of this begins to address the overwhelming factor of the almost universal degeneration of critical thinking, creativity,

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authenticity, freedom, and autonomy in our time: technology and its proliferation, compulsory intrusion, and complete assimilation into every aspect of our lives. Sadly, most people support, accept, or are at best ambivalent to technology's grasp while actively or circumstantially marginalizing those who resist it, but that's a colossal can of worms we'll begin to open soon.

Certainly, we all experience the world so differently from each other. The myriad of ways we can be brought down far outnumber the uplifting empowerment within the games of this world. Many of these situations we are born into and die within. But even within these dynamics there is an infinite world of perspectives, emotions, desires, aesthetics, and experiences to motivate and make us who we are. Is it not understandable that we seek those who have similar motivations, or at least those who understand us and compliment and challenge us in interesting ways? We owe nothing to anyone but ourselves and to those we intentionally and freely commit to in the specific situations of our lives. These are the bonds that mean something, that we can nourish, that we might die for, not some abstract allies in an abstract struggle for abstract ideas that we might not even really agree with. No, I would never step on the neck of someone being brought down by power, and in most cases would help in any way I felt I could to toss off the boot of oppression, but we are all under the constant stomping of agendas that stamp out the years, days, hours,

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bolic, and simplistic meanings, but I sometimes prefer the playful use of “leaderless cult”. In these times, it more adequately describes the anti-societal place of the unique autonomous intimate grouping with shared values and techniques that exist on the edges of and contrary to a society hostile to its very existence. Again, that is another conversation, one probably beginning with me being bombarded with moralistic attacks and linguistic scoldings. Oh well.

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Lil Bird in the Darkness

a lil bird came through the darkness
whispered of daylight to come
i knew right then we'd fly off together
she was my true and only one

oh, lil bird flyin' in the darkness
sing your sweet song to me
no other voice can melt my cold heart
no other song can set me free

with wings so soft and so tender
and a heart so pure and true
i could fly this whole world over
never find another one just like you

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well, the sky is just another prison
this world a firey burning hell
you got the key to set my soul free
free from this dark and cold cell

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we'll build a nest in a strong old oak tree
from scraps of long forgotten things
we'll share it with our own little birdies
someday to spread their own little wings

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Nazel Pickens

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"Well, the sun is settin'... our ship has sailed... we missed the train... the show is over... time to throw in the towel... yes, doom is upon us" says a boy in a strangely cold and detached tone.

"But if you think like that, son, we've already lost. You might as well just go to sleep or join the circus" replies an obviously disappointed man with a weathered face framed by white hair.

In comes crookedly staggering the spirit-infused black-clad outlaw: "I'm gonna kill this bottle of bourbon from last night's wickedly invigorating debauched carnival, fill it with some stolen petrol, stuff in an ol' snot rag, light it, and toss it at whatever stands in the way of my freedom, and maybe, if time allows, and some impressionable youths filled with their own righteous rage are around to hear, I'll loudly snarl to that particular beast why I feel it needs to be slaughtered, but being sure to duck back into the darkness before it could offer one more dying breath excuse..."

And the curtain closes as flames begin to engulf the auditorium...

After what feels like a painfully extended period of motionless dark, an orange-tinted light begins to slowly and delicately illuminate the figure of a scruffy middle-aged man with salt-and-peppered curly hair and beard awkwardly hunched over a large, rough yet solidly-constructed oak table that is cluttered with scraps of torn paper, notebooks, a well-worn leather-bound journal, an over-sized mug of coffee, mounds of old candle wax, stained envelopes, a large knife, tattered photos, some half-smoked joints, a box of seeds, a rusted typewriter, two empty wine bottles, piles of

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Black Blossoms at the End of the World

"Well, the sun is settin'... our ship has sailed... we missed the train... the show is over... time to throw in the towel... yes, doom is upon us" says a boy in a strangely cold and detached tone.

"But if you think like that, son, we've already lost. You might as well just go to sleep or join the circus" replies an obviously disappointed man with a weathered face framed by white hair.

In comes crookedly staggering the spirit-infused black-clad outlaw: "I'm gonna kill this bottle of bourbon from last night's wickedly invigorating debauched carnival, fill it with some stolen petrol, stuff in an ol' snot rag, light it, and toss it at whatever stands in the way of my freedom, and maybe, if time allows, and some impressionable youths filled with their own righteous rage are around to hear, I'll loudly snarl to that particular beast why I feel it needs to be slaughtered, but being sure to duck back into the darkness before it could offer one more dying breath excuse... then go plant some daisies with those I love!"

And the curtain closes as flames begin to engulf the auditorium...

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old books, a pair of broken reading glasses, and a cup filled with chewed-up pencils. A battered guitar leans precariously against the table. He calmly stares out the dirty window into an overgrown forest, sporadically breaking his seemingly meditative daze to frantically scribble...

A Bouquet of Fragments, Scraps, Notes, Scribbles, and Ramblin's Discovered in a Backwoods Cabin

It is in the *critical question* that I find in myself what some might constitute or perceive as a glimmer of hope and potential for some possible future for myself and those I care about: those who recognize deeply and unapologetically the context we inhabit (at least the best as any of us can), both historically and today, and move from that with clarity, emotional vulnerability, an honest subjectivity, and clever imagination. At least in the external world these questions are some inspirations... out there. In my own life, what some might characterize as hope is a river, rough at times, stagnant in places, temporarily constrained by the obstructions I have constructed (knowingly and not) and those obstacles from others. But hope, as most would use the term, is usually one more scheme to keep the dogs from leaping at their master's jugular, the hope for a better tomorrow, for a special treat, for one more meal, for a bigger park, for one less kick to the head. Hope is for cowards who can't see themselves jumping head first (or feet first, if you are

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less cerebrally-oriented) into the abyss of freedom. Yes, I said “freedom,” sorry if some feel that’s a term that is too antiquated, loaded, or amorphous. Freedom is my bottom line, my heartbeat, my dance, what fires my guns, where safety, guarantees, plans, ideologies, and happy endings are foreign concepts. Freedom is not a goal, something to win, someplace to go or get to. Freedom is lived. It is within us, busting at our fabricated seams. Ya can’t get there from here, because yer already there if ya want it, if ya can see through the layers upon layers of scarification, masks, and armor, not to mention the uniforms and gangs to boot. So, hope (and concepts like it), goal-oriented procedures, and dialectical relationships can only obscure and derail any authentic urges for freedom. At times, it seems, that hope and hopelessness might be one and the same. I suppose it depends on when and where ya meet them, how ya look at them, and what you do with them, but we’ll get to that later... maybe.

But, to be blunt, in times when humanity and technology have become intertwined more deeply, completely, and willingly than described in the most horrific of any science fiction novels, where they become one, dystopia and utopia blur and become indistinguishable, and the only hope is escape, preferably while tossing a lit match, and perhaps a communique describing an overgeneralized intent and personal motivation, and maybe even a heavily encrypted mapping of exodus. I have no intention of saving a sinking ship, rescuing any of its passengers, or

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singing a sad ballad of its demise. I'm grabbin' those I love and makin' a swim for it, without a life jacket and with no apologies to the delusional moralists fightin' the Good Fight to save this vessel of misery. No, I am free.

On the Shores of the Garden of Unique

As I awaken on the shore of some unknown place, the salt and sun blinds my perception. I rub my eyes, and begin to see an odd but luscious garden, one both familiar and foreign to me. As someone who tends toward finding threads of significance in a wide range of narratives, who finds more relevance in the tension between ideas than in any pure pole, and who is disinterested in most of what passes for critique, I thank the few who are breathing fresh air back into anti-civilization and anarchist discourses. They are rare. These folks are weaving a beautiful and detailed tapestry against the nightmare, by intertwining various parallel, diverging, and contradictory perspectives into a compelling condemnation of civilization, domestication, and the general brutality and capture of life. As potent fragments against domestication continually set their scope on the poisonous tentacles slithering around and within us, not only raging against the beast of civilization, but also strengthening resistance by offering up honest challenges to marxist, essentialist, and primitivist shortcomings, limited scopes, and over-simplifications in relation to the ever-expanding domesticating process.

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But also, in walking through this world it is of great value to our own health, happiness, and autonomy to reconcile the diverse perspectives that we sometimes abhor, are inspired or betrayed by, etc. without becoming either a post-modern jester or new-aged huckster. I continue to pick through the refuse and wreckage of the world I've been pushed into. I sometimes find treasures mixed in with the plastic debris, and on my crooked mantle I temporarily place these trinkets, potions, and skulls, and in my workshop I dismantle and reconfigure them, and in my bedroom I strap them on, and in my kitchen I combine them, and through my copper coils I distill them, and in my songs I summon them. Here and now, this is what I have to play with.

Clarity and Confusion

As I wander this heart-breaking landscape, I admit that I am confused by what I perceive. But to seek clarity out of confusion is perhaps more dubious than being confused by clarity. My desire is to be authentic to what I can best understand as mySelf. This is a life-long process of getting to know my own story, each moment and through all possible forms of perception, open to what may seem conflictual understandings of mySelf and how I inhabit this world through the various relationships I encounter. I wish to wake up each morning amazed both by how wrong I am and how much I do seem to comprehend, sometimes in

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the same moment. I want to grow into a dementia of being by knowing mySelf and forgetting the domesticated me.

When I look outward, I am deeply saddened by most of what is presented as the stories of this world, and also, it seems, I could not care less. I have no external hopes or dreams, yet joyousness, playfulness, deep care, focused intention, visions, and spirited rebelliousness abound through and around me. While it seems that clarity can often lead to deeper confusion, not knowing is always easy. Just as being certain is too damn hard for anything short of a God or Law. Still, despite the ever-turbulent undertow beneath a sliver of glassy calm, I'm mostly convinced of a few things. I know that civilization is a generalized, collective, spastic, plotting, epoch of misery that extends for millennia, that it has twisted human experience into a monstrous and deranged form, with diverging and converging intersections all along the way, wreaking havoc on all of our coconspirators of life on this planet (whether they want anything to do with us or not). Not necessarily fully intended, nor can it be viewed as accidental, I don't think civilization's logic and mannerisms were sent down here from on high nor flown in from another galaxy (though maybe that guy whose always on the library computer is right, which might require a different tone). Of course I don't think it's that simple. Civilization's dynamics and motivations are clear, veiled, distorted, and layered.

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I have often viewed domestication as the most significant process in civilization's control, in the context of agriculture and animal husbandry, and in the general concept of manipulation and control for the benefit of a specific being, collection, or system over others. Both civilization and domestication work against freedom, which is my bottom line. Freedom, the fuel, by-product, off-gassing, and essence of anarchy. Not necessarily the essence of who we are, but maybe a glimmer of who we may have once, in certain situations, been related to, and that a few have been able to enact and express (however briefly), and what some may be able to move towards and dance within. Not a prescription, tonic, or idea, but an essence.

And in pursuit of freedom, I act according to the fullest of my being—unless I am temporarily seduced by others' dreams; some of which I briefly welcome, others I situationally bend to. (Temporary detours can teach us a lot about ourselves, our processes, and lived ecology.) And to those who cast doubt on me, I ask you to prove me wrong, provided you really have something unique to show me. I still have much venom to release and love to share. I can't honestly say that I care about your world. I live in mine. Maybe we'll meet someday, either arm in arm or across a sometimes clear, sometimes blurry, line. When? Where? You decide the terms of engagement, I know where my feet stand and what I am armed with. I am still for much of the same things I have ever been, but I'm also still figuring out

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who deserves more of my focused animosity, the sheriff about to strike me down and tear me from those I care about or the all-pervasive tentacles of the beast. True, they are the same, but one I can still evade or possibly slay, the other I can only strike with shadows.

Is There Anything Left in Anarchy?

I began with nothing on this journey, and I am once again left empty-handed, so I arm myself with lessons obtained along the way. As I reflect, I acknowledge that in my native youthful transition from activist to anarchist, I too fell into trappings of the anarcho-Left, unaware that I was positioning myself in the street-fighting and aggressive rhetorical portion of that ideology (I'm still waiting for my check from ol' Soros). It didn't take long, however, for me to scratch through the surface of popularized anarchist history and theory to understand that despite how most anarchists behave, we are not on a political spectrum that includes the Left. We are inherently different. In fact, we share as much with the political Left as we do with the political Right: a few superficially-similar phrases, aka nothing. As individuals seeking freedom and autonomy, we may personally resonate with or relate to a few ideas of those trapped within the political spectrum without being trapped ourselves. This distance is hardest to understand for those unaware that they are trapped, who cannot see outside certain politicized boxes. The Left and the Right

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use and frame terms in ways that strengthen their own positions, making the most topical and sometimes controversial labels (“tribalism”, “eco-extremism”, and “fascism” for instance) impossible to see or discuss clearly. They trap people in prefabricated and opportunistic boxes like “identity,” and formulaic interpretations of “oppression”. In this context, not much can be honestly discussed. Those who propose any slight deviation, or even honest critical analysis, are quickly discarded as enemies “who just don’t get it”. This is one of many reasons for removing myself from most anarchist discourses and for some people mis-labeling me a nihilist (or worse).

One aspect of the anarcho-Left is their inability to refrain from self-righteous rhetoric, clichés, and over-generalizations (“fuck white supremacy”, “smash patriarchy”, “compost capitalism”, etc). Not only is this sloganeering juvenile and inarticulate, it is often coupled with a superiority complex, as if sophomoric catchphrases frees one from deeper implications. I can understand what it might be like to leave a suburban bubble and get into the world, becoming exposed to how horrible things really are, and how enormously difficult it is to go down the rabbit hole of honest assessment: to awaken, as some have suggested. I understand that most of us move from shallower to more complex understandings, and that regurgitating rhetoric is often a starting point for that process, but the comfort of perpetually dwelling in that space

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is frustrating, shallow, and often coupled with reactionary impulses. Unless one can contextualize these ideas with more complicated understandings, we get nothing more than idea actors playing pre-fashioned roles, similar to the bonehead reactionaries they are in opposition to: Left vs. Right, Good vs. Bad, Right vs. Wrong, Forward vs. Backward. This is not a war anarchists should be a part of. Let them eat each other, our war is one for freedom: freedom of thought without ideological restraint, of action without political litmus, of association without submission.

In my experience, most people's perspectives change radically from dramatic experiences—whether traumatic or blissful—not from political persuasion, inclusion, bullying, shaming, or rhetoric. Trying to force political growth (assuming that anything political could be viewed as positive), only produces ideological zombies going through motions for agendas outside of themselves. Many these days see no need to address nuanced diversions from general topics, since appreciation for subtle variation has been sidelined by impenetrable declarations—usually structured around moral agendas—rather than unique personal perspectives: the sad dead world where things are either “Liked” or “Ignored”.

Of the aspects still lingering like a foul death stench from the residue of the Left within anarchist discourse and action, morality is the most distinguishable and seemingly least extinguishable. Either by choice, through habit, or

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One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

situations, but that does not make it untrue or less dangerous. statement with some sort of vague articulation and juxtapo- tion of progressive politics. Of course, they would reject this themselves, in thought and action, as the most radical posi- through lack of critical reflection, many anarchists position

through lack of critical reflection, many anarchists position themselves, in thought and action, as the most radical position of progressive politics. Of course, they would reject this statement with some sort of vague articulation and juxtapositions, but that does not make it untrue or less dangerous.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

While this culture is a crashing super-sized jetliner always accelerating as it speeds towards its doom, it is tempting to look over our shoulders at what brought us to this disaster, and what may have preceded its horrific flight—tempting, and in some provocative ways, useful and inspiring. Examining the past, from both human- and nonhuman-centric perspectives, allows us hints of insight on situations and the possible motivations for common narratives and the influences behind them. What we might learn, once we critically sift through the layers and incentives, and how we might view them, are for inspiration, for limited techniques, for warnings, and possibly some re-calibrations of our thought processes; we are not taking direction or making blueprints for direct instruction or any specific form.

When young, as I became more conscious of the convoluted civilized world, I looked for ways out, for a way to a simpler, less problematic time. For some time, due to the overwhelming weight and misery of this world, I took comfort in some anarchist articulations of the perceived lifestyles of a generalized hunter-gatherer and felt close to

perspectives looking to reproduce that. While I still appreciate many of the fundamental questions raised by these perspectives and their challenges to civilized assumptions, some of the most vocal people raising these vital critiques and questions seemed to seek obedience to a singular and fixed notion, creating what I now view as a fossilized primitive historical society, similar to the out-of-context medieval antics of the Society for Creative Anachronisms. This kind of performative de-contextualization is not how I wish to interact with, or think about, the primitive or anarchy.

I still find a lot of inspiration in, and even am envious of, pre-historic and hunter-gatherer peoples. Varied groupings of primarily nomadic bands that existed prior to agriculture, domestication, and perhaps even language and art, seem to have fewer problems than any social formation that followed. Institutions and the hyper-organized formalization of social groupings, for example, do not seem to appear where and when there is no material rational for them, such as economized surplus from agriculture, militarized warfare over encroached territory, and over-arching moralistic enculturation to deal with overpopulation. Environmental destruction was minimized by practices that seem more integrated into ecological situations rather than abstractions, but also, by the minimal density of people. Small, decentralized groups, especially in band-type self-organization, allow for face-to-face decision making, which prioritizes the wants and needs of the individuals involved and

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can lead to more egalitarian power dynamics. Much of all this, however, seems to be primarily informed by logistics and material conditions, such as low population density, intact and thriving ecosystems, and subsistence strategies in balance with them, rather than some inherent good in humans or some positive human nature.

So, yes, there are important lessons to be learned from so-called primitive forms of social life, but that doesn't mean anarchists would use them as blueprints for where to go from here. The world is not the same place it was. Environmental destruction has wreaked havoc in every ecosystem on the planet, and due to an industrially-induced warming biosphere, even more dramatic changes are on the way. Many plant and animal species, each vital parts of intricate and evolving food webs, are currently in extreme decline or have become extinct. The global population, eight billion people and rising (twice from half a century ago), is increasingly urban—meaning surviving through methods that are completely disconnected from anything resembling a balanced and earth-based reality, let alone a hunter-gatherer existence. Yes, some hunter-gatherers still exist. Yes, they are inspiring and could use support. Yes, we can learn a lot from them. They have been able to survive outside the beast, and—like species at the edges of glacial advances that reseed barren areas once glaciers retreat—these people's lifeways might inform a way forward, but the impact these lessons can make at this point seems situational at best.

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Probably most useful for our lives here and now and in the foreseeable future, are what we can learn from those living creatively and rebelliously in the margins over the past few hundred years, against industrialism, mass society, and the proliferation of modern technology, those living through transitional situations, those adapting to completely foreign circumstances in healthy and unique ways, those living in escape, those connecting to deeper currents of living. While many praise flexibility and adaptation, what they usually mean is acceptance and rationalization of unacceptable situations. There are other ways to adapt, grow, and flourish in the margins, and possibly, as this world crumbles, in the cracks, from the refuse, and on the rubble. Regardless, the determining factors are the motivations of those involved and the connection to the place they inhabit. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. This process is in its infancy, and there is so much in our way that makes most of this discussion, in many ways, hypothetical.

You Can't Get There from Here, But in the Meantime...

From where my tattered and dusty ol' boots touch the earth, the place between here and there seems impossible. In reality, it is both right in front of our faces and also infinitely far, depending on personal situations, scope, priority, and perspective. A baby step to some might be a great leap for others. But trying to create our worlds within this one is clearly neither satisfactory nor desirable. Yes, the edges

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offer temporary spaces of experimentation and personal moments of liberation, but there is no room for long-term visions of free life. Too much needs to come down, both structural and systematic. We can't know whether collapse will happen through the system's own weight, or with help from barbarians, but we do know that more possibilities open up the sooner and the quicker that collapse happens. Soft landings offer too many opportunities for management, rationalizations, and recuperation, and prolong increasing irreversible environmental degradation, not to mention missing the opportunities of living our lives without all of this. Anarchist propaganda geared towards convincing the masses, promoting peaceful transitions, and condemnation of so-called eco-extremism (either as moralism or as public relations) only delays action, undermines effectiveness, and promotes self-aggrandizing (like the idea that we are The Just Ones with The Reasonable Ideas). But to those trapped by the logic of the system, we can only be viewed as enemies. Unless one is only attempting to sell books, obtain a position within the system, or enshrine their historical legacy as a thinker, this positioning is counter-productive and dishonest.

Most of this world has to go, and this cannot be managed, directed, or planned. Despite my public cheerleading and endorsement of the inspiring and courageous Earth Liberation Front actions in the late-90s through the mid-2000s, I often felt their "code of ethics" held them back. Beyond

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their moralism and public-relations focus, not to mention their often tangential and symptomatic targets, I hoped they would merge with more strategically relevant tendencies and take a more honest look at the world and what might be necessary to Hit 'Um Where It Hurts, which mostly means infrastructural (techno-grids and networks along with those who manage them). This has not happened on any meaningful level, at least here in the US, and anything approaching this activity is quickly denounced by almost everyone, including most so-called anarchists. But such extreme actions would be entirely understandable given the society we currently inhabit and most people's acquiescence to it. It's better to be clear in our personal criticism of these extremist positions, rather than dismissing and judging those who express them. For instance, the Mexican nihilist group ITS seems to have gone off a deep end (if there is even much reality to the group). Rather than pretend this phenomenon has no relevance to an anti-civ discourse, why not approach it in a critical way (as some have done), rather than just throwing one-line insults that sound like the apologists for the world-as-it-is. In a time of unprecedented ecological crisis, compounded by the nightmare of technological addiction and reactionary politics, extreme resistance to this horrific reality seems reasonable and unavoidable, but anything remotely effective will not fit into any moral or ideological parameters... and maybe the deep end is the only place we can dive into without breaking our necks.

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One thing is for sure, the hardening of ideology, both in individuals and in groups, is unfortunate. Ideology is the inertia of a self-perpetuating feedback loop, with false questions coming from and feeding back into predetermined answers. Most troubling along these lines, in regard to anti-civilization anarchists, has been the increased rigidity of anarcho-primitivists, and those who rely on a methodology of juxtaposed proof and a heavy-handed coloring of situations to see in them what they want to see. Anarcho-Primitivists often have an extreme hostility towards opinions that diverge even slightly, opinions that don't fit exactly with the cemented A-P position, opinions that could offer interesting context and exploration. There are many intelligent and thoughtful anarchists who have their own critiques and plans of action against civilization. Must we all agree on exactly what civilization is before we have meaningful positive relations and mutually beneficial conversations? Is it always necessary to draw lines to be clear? There is much that I want nothing to do with, but dismissiveness and hostility towards people who are demonstrably against civilization just because their hatred is hues differently—despite being very tangible and very anarchistic—is self defeating. Some seem to be painting themselves into ideological corners that leave them very marginalized, which is unfortunate both for the primitivist critique and for the wider anti-civilization perspective. Hope is another false promise of the ideologue, especially critique and for the wider anti-civilization perspective.

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Hope is another false promise of the ideologue, es-

pecially in times of great misery and despair. I refuse to provide pie-in-the-sky false narratives for people with a straight face. I would rather move ahead in my life projects against civilization with a clarity that is responding to the stark reality I wish to destroy, than offer delusional wishful thinking for people who probably don't have the commitment to stick with difficult ideas and actions. Some primitivists have said that anarchists who are not active in ways that tend to look more like activism than revolt, are just "throwing in the towel," have given up or are in retreat. But who's retreating, those who despise civilization even more each day, and act on that with an honest heart, clear mind, and rebellious spirit, or those who mostly publicly preach ideology, mostly to their choir of fans?

Some cry: "if you're cynical and jaded, how can you call yourself an anarchist?" But how can you be an anarchist, especially an anti-civ one, and not be cynical about modern humans? There is no reason to believe humans are inherently good. Based on what we can know from human records (from the vast pre-history until now) and on my immediate experiences, we are all capable of unimaginable beauty and unfathomable horribleness. And yes, the (mostly material) conditions of a more integrated hunter-gather lifeway in healthy intact eco-systems allows for the more desirable human characteristics to flourish while strongly limiting the more institutional and detrimental. Yes, this could be termed Primal Anarchy, but it has no

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need for any moralist-driven notion of “human nature”: Yes, modern culture is a degenerative and saddening slope away from more sustainable life-ways, and yes, domestication is the overwhelming dynamic in that direction. But, considering the modern world, what does that naming and perspective offer us? A glimmer of situational hope, and perspective as to how far we’ve gone, and some potential for individuals in small groups to possibly learn from. Equating disagreement with ignorance is common for ideologues, as it is lazy and stems from arrogance and intolerance, not from critical thought. None of us have answers, and to me it’s more interesting and provocative to weave various narratives, stories, and understandings of history, and to ponder various possibilities for ourselves and those we care about. Do primitivists hold the myriad of indigenous perspectives to their same rigid definitions? How about marginalized peoples stuck in feudal or industrial situations? How about those outside academia with a more experiential hatred of civilization? Primitivists seem to have little room for other perspectives. Is not domestication the enslavement of the individual and its freedom and autonomy to live as one pleases? Domestication could be said to be the beginnings of what we call civilization. I tend to agree with this analysis, but is it not also the major active dynamic that controls our lives here and now? Isn’t domestication the dynamic forcing social compliance? Doesn’t domestication force compulsory dependence on everything

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from economics to the state to technological enslavement to moralism? Yes, domestication is about agriculture, animal husbandry, and the institutions that arise from dominating the world we inhabit, but it is much more than that. Is it not just as relevant, and possibly more so, to talk about the domestication of our lives today? Isn't this domestication what benefits the system at the expense of all of us?

So, we come back to morality (and its softer cousin, ethics), which should be ridiculed and set aflame. They have always been and will always be major forces behind control and domestication, and the reactionary responses to them. I am for a completely different world, perhaps similar in some ways to the worlds of many primitive peoples, but also defined by who I am here and now, and the dreams and desires of me and those with whom I have affinity. Elevating a general analysis over other people's subjective feelings based on their own analysis and experiences is arrogant and opportunistic. Do primitivists fear egoist and individualist perspectives? Do such perspectives interfere with a primitivist approach or agenda? Do primitivists feel competitive about ideas? Can they not see the relevance of egoist/individualist ideas, or why people might be skeptical (even hostile) to the more mass-movement, pseudo-optimistic green revolution (which some primitivists seem to promote)? Primitivism has become a singular answer to potent questions once raised by primitivists, but I am not looking for more answers; they almost always cause more problems than they resolve.

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I feel that this current global culture (at least in the so-called first world, but virally expanding rapidly to encompass all) mass produces helplessly narcissistic entitled victims who need everything at their fingertips, with no real responsibility for their immediate world. Sure, they have the latest correctly-defined, produced, consumed, and released.

And from the wreckage, our spirit may be broken or released. I believe that while one's connection to, and understanding of, one's unique spirit changes through time, space, and circumstance, one's essential being, who we each are, remains fairly constant. Scars, bruises, growth, and connections alter layers or aspects of us in meaningful ways, but we remain our authentic unmediated selves. Certain aspects of our unique selves are revealed in relation to specific situations and relationships. For me, my life has been a unique path and process of understanding myself more deeply and honestly... of distillation. Consider this in reference to the current situation, the most profound crisis our species has ever been in, and one that many humans have welcomed with open arms and closed minds. In some respect that has always been the dilemma, but this period seems more fundamentally horrific, and of course it's the only time I can really know. This is where my rebellion begins, the bottom floor, subterranean, at the roots and in the decay of rotten debris.

A Distilled-Spirit Rebellion in the Virtual Age

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gurgitated views on the most specific of subjects and artificially nuanced perspectives that could only be thought about atop a colossal mountain of excess and privilege, and yet most can't begin to feed themselves, remember anything, directly communicate meaningfully with others, and, of course, think critically. They are the product of the post-postmodern world, one that arbitrarily solidifies and dissolves into the next customized ad, and this stage is just beginning. Try to be authentic in that.

I tap out. My immediate goal is escape, with accomplices of affinity. And in evasion, departure, and escape, imagination and survival work together in some improvised interweaving of rhythm and melody to create a rhapsody of the authentically living. It is here that our thoughts, experiences, lessons, and motivations might begin to make sense. Authenticity and anarchy are not in internet discussions, podcasts, books, periodicals, or radio shows... they are our lives! Those forums are merely venues for dialogue, debate, and raising questions, but no substitute for lived anarchy.

Some wish to continue on the path of giving people answers, which we all know is (whether intentionally or not) dishonest, manipulative, and counterproductive. I support those who offer unique perspectives, who raise important questions that we will perhaps integrate into our own perspectives, possibly in the creation of our lives and in our fight against the logic and apparatus of civilization, and, perhaps, in the formation of deeper collabora-

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tions. We don't need another all-encompassing panacea or rigid ideology, we need critical thinkers and courageous doers who contribute in their own unique ways to the momentum against civilization and create lives based in wild anarchy. That's my take. That's what I pass on to my kids. And so, I leave. Exit the stage and into life. But there are other footsteps dancing in the sand, haphazard and at

Some might ask what I do. I do the same as I've always done, just in a healthier and more immediate context and with more intention and creativity than when I was more engaged with the anarchist scene. I live on land with friends and family on the edge of a small rural town, connected to a limited network of anti-civilization-oriented anarchists (each with our own unique perspective), creating a life of joy and connection on a human scale, removing ourselves from as much of the system as possible (it's a process), helping each other where we can, relearning skills we lost or may have never had, challenging authority all around us, undermining the system and its logic in very real ways, making mistakes, laughing a lot, crying some, writing a little, playing a bunch, putting faith in deepening relationships (rather than the faceless mass of humanity, the falseness of identities, or the superficiality of scenes), preparing for battles that will make Seattle look like a picnic and the sixties revolts look like a love in, and helping critically-thinking free kids grow along these lines in a world at its end. If that's throwin' in the towel, than let that rag fuckin' drop.

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the same time patterned. Authentic freedom, essentially, has always been the anarchist project to understand and to live. It is a quest that has united and divided in both idea and practice, which has brought me to the obvious conclusion that only in radically-decentralized affinity-based relationships is authentic freedom even possible. These relationships obviously extend to the non-human world we are inherently and intricately part of. But focusing on micro-affinities does not necessarily divorce us from the possibility of partially-overlapping and situational affinities that exist in varying degrees of difference or divergence, especially in terms of subsistence and revolt. Always re-forming and re-arranging, creating swirling and spiraling clusters of affinity. I believe that this, as opposed to organized deadness, is what life is. Ideas, principles, and morals on any plane outside the individual diminish this essence of freedom. But to engage with another in authentic freedom is the joy of living. That is our theory and our practice. We are the black blossoms at the end of the world.

From our roots to our leaves...

*I like persons better than principles, and I like persons
with no principles better than anything else in the world.*

Lord Henry in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,
Oscar Wilde

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As the orange flame sun
 Hides behind emerald mountains
 I sit still in wild wonder
 Dream on youth's fountains
 The days all used up
 You can never go back
 Everything in this world
 Fades to black
 Swam turquoise waters
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 Never seems like enough
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 Your scarlet ribbons faded
 Blue dress frayed and torn
 You have only rags
 From the skins you once worn
 But it don't really matter
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Fade to Black

54

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54

Everything in this world
Fades to black

Autumn leaves pale to yellow
As my dark hair turns grey
I'm left in a cold room
With not much to say
I don't wanna bring ya down
Or anything like that
But, everything in this world
Fades to black

Spring's flowers of violet
Turn a dead brown
And all of my bright dreams
Have abandoned this town
No matter how hard you fly
We always fall back
Because, everything in this world
Fades to black

Well, I still have some silver
But I lost all my gold
And this body I travel in
Is tattered and old
But, It ain't what ya have
Or all that you lack

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Nazel Pickens

Everything in this world
Fades to black
The rainbow has ended
Kaleidoscopes rust
And bones that once carried me
Return back to dust
Life's only a glimmer
Death just a crack
Everything in this world
Fades to black
Sometimes it goes quickly
And sometimes it fades slow
But sooner or later
We all gotta go
When shadows thicken
And your front is your back
Then everything in this world
Has now faded to black

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Nazel Pickens

Invecchiare Selvatico
(no return address)

Blood Splatters Thicker than Ink
A Letter To Leon F. Czolgosz
Fordham Drive Buffalo, New York

HANDLE WITH CARE

Oh Leon,
How I wish our paths had crossed. Maybe the dust of our bones will someday mingle, but our cosmic spirits of rebellion have always been kindred. If I were trapped on a deserted island, which is where we appear to be in many respects, you would be one of the few I would choose to be with me: honest, to the point, unwavering, motivating, willing to deal with the hard stuff that most are too chicken shit to handle. Even among anarchists, people like you are hard to come by in these times of acquiescence to psychic mutilation and servitude to flattened identities within the machine of deadness. Where are your kind to be found now, those whose thirst for life and freedom, for anarchy, can never be quenched. If there are other dimensions beyond this life that give you special power (which we cannot attain or understand from our mortal positions), could you help us out? At any rate, may you be a muse to inspire those free spirits born into this dead world, a

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world that vampirically feeds on the nectar of life. From your artistic work, even grander pieces could be created, perhaps even collaborative and improvisational endeavors in pursuit of the living art of life and death. It could be a real bang. We would have a blast.

Aesthetically, the work of black-powder artist Lee Harvey Oswald (sixty some years after your significant deed and almost a decade before my birth) has always appealed to me. Compositionally, Oswald's most significant piece was brilliant, both in the physical form (following function of course, but in a Jackson Pollock sort of way—oops, Pollock's work came after your time too), and culturally, as he destroyed the grotesque dream of a Camelot to rule a new age with a nylon glove. Oswald's Day in Dallas was a poetic masterpiece that will be reinterpreted for generations, but he was a one-hit wonder whose motivations and tactics will never be entirely clear. *He* may have been a mere vessel that the universe worked through. But *you*, Leon, were an anarchist. And you, Leon, seemed to be motivated by both beautiful ideas and passions that cannot be put to the words of politics, that can only be expressed in unmediated action. Like those of us on the fringes of society, even within the microcosm of anarchists you were always an outsider. Labeled “disturbed and deranged”, belonging to no anarchist group, not known within the movement, you were the true individualist anarchist, acting without sanction, acting from your own passions, and

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acting outside the written word of pen and paper, expressing yourself through life and death.

After your radically individualist (anarchist) act, most anarchists abandoned you—with a few notable exceptions, including Emma Goldman. Most anarchists distanced themselves from you, threw you under the trolley, and stuck to the less dangerous word play and missionary positions of “radicalizing the masses”, a futile goal even in your turbulent and fertile time. You thoroughly convinced the authorities in the US that anarchists could be a viable threat to their power, and they acted accordingly. The state rounded up many of our kind, deported scores, and performed their own executions, but if more of us had taken up the gun, knife, and bomb—either in solidarity or out of our own individual motivations—the war could have been on. Instead there was a top-down crushing of anarchist spirit and genuine freedom. Leave it to humans to miss the opportunity and take the path of less resistance—at least in this regard water carves canyons and sustains life, but for humans, the path of least resistance creates lethargy, excuses, and poor representations of meaningfulness.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Yes, you are the only anarchist to have assassinated a President of the US, but I am writing to you mostly to express that you are not alone in your feelings of isolation from a healthy social context. You are not alone in your instinctive hatred for

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a system that creates mostly disaffected and dispossessed people who suffer under the boot of a minority. You are not alone in your feelings that this system cannot be reformed, but must be dismantled from the top to its foundations, and that this dismantling has a very physical and bloody reality. The concepts that might inform this understanding and process are, quite simply, anarchy. These concepts don't require endless discussions, useful only to those who want to avoid getting their hands dirty (or bloody). If people harnessed these concepts, the result could be a spiraling undoing of this monstrous conglomeration of oppression, an undoing on a profound scale. But in the absence of such a social or collective context (or, perhaps parallel to it), so-called loner anti-social behavior is not to be underestimated or undervalued, either for inspiring others or for the personal awakening that can come from direct conflict with an unhealthy social order.

Again, I'm getting ahead of myself. I'm just so excited to be writing you. I want to understand who you were, what led up to your finest work, how you came into your less-mediated self. Forgive me if I get wrong any of the details of your life; I am piecing together scraps from appreciative comrades from your time—and from other anarchists who were absurdly critical of you after the fact—while cross-checking these details with the agenda-driven narrative of our enemy. As far as I understand, you were born in Alpena, Michigan, on May 5, 1873. Your parents,

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Paul Czolgosz and Mary Nowak, were Polish immigrants, although there are stories that they were actually from Hungary. Various records have your ancestors coming from what is now called Belarus and your parents may have migrated to the US sometime in the 1860s from Astravyets (Ostrowiec) near Wilno. When they arrived in the US, their ethnicity was noted as Hungarian and the spelling of the surname changed from Zholhus (Жолгусь, Żołguś) to Czolgosz, roughly pronounced “CHOW-gos”, as I understand it. Your three older brothers, Warren, Frank, and Joseph, were born in Poland, while Louis, your younger brother, was also born in Michigan. When you were five, your family moved to Detroit, and when ten, while living in Posen, Michigan, your mother died, six weeks after giving birth to your sister, Victoria.

Most accounts agree that your family moved around quite a bit, as did I when young. This might have added to a sense of displacement in an already fragmented and alienated world, a sense that perhaps we shared. Some people observed you as a child being bullied by peers. Some claim that you seemed to have no interest in deep friendships, romantic or platonic. Whether that was cause or effect, you were socially marginalized. These days, no doubt, you would be identified and easily written off as “some incel dude”. How little changes with the domesticated human’s tendency to oversimplify, mischaracterize, and ridicule what they don’t like or understand, or what does

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not fit in. Who could blame you for self-isolating in the midst of such deformation?

By your midteens, it appears that you worked in a glass factory in Natrona, Pennsylvania, and by age seventeen, you found employment at the Cleveland Rolling Mill Company. At twenty, during the economic crash of 1893, the factory closed for some time and on re-opening drastically reduced wages. This resulted in a violent strike. You were fired and blacklisted. I appreciate the alias you chose, Fred Nieman (Nieman in Polish/German means "nobody"). I enjoy the playfully nihilistic, or at least humbly anonymous, nature to this name, and it helped you regain your job post-blacklisting. Unfortunately, paranoid and exclusivist anarchists used it later as a reason for suspicion of you and to distance you from possible accomplices. This is infuriating to me, but we shall get to the shortcomings and problematic qualities of so-called anarchists later.

Your experiences around the strike, and witnessing a number of similar workers' fights often ending in violence, seems to have affected you greatly. You began to think more deeply about the inequality between the wealthy and workers. As economic and social conditions deteriorated around you, you found no comfort in the Catholic Church and other immigrant institutions embraced by your family. You sought others who shared your concerns, joining first the Knights of the Golden Eagle, a moderate working

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man's socialist club, and then becoming a member of a more radical socialist group, the Sila Club, where you became interested in anarchism.

Some sources claimed, based on a prolonged period of social distancing, that in 1898 you were ill from a respiratory disease or had a nervous breakdown. A more honest assessment might lean towards the interpretation that when you quit your job and settled on your father's farm in Warrensville, Ohio, you took the opportunity to disengage from the sick society that you despised. During this period, for which some labeled you an escapist anti-social recluse, you seemed to have deepened your interest in anarchism and other radical ideas. It appears that the assassination of King Umberto I of Italy on July 29, 1900, by Italian anarchist Gaetano Bresci, changed your life forever, setting you on the glorious trajectory of "propaganda by the deed". Bresci told the press that he had decided to take matters into his own hands for the sake of the common man. This act reinforced your sense of the great injustice of society, underpinned by an inherent inequality that allowed the wealthy to exploit the poor, and with roots in the structure of government itself. You also seemed to understand that American society as a whole exemplified this stratification, and to believe that individual acts could help undermine and eventually destroy this inequality.

At this point, it appears that you searched for accomplices against society, eventually contacting mem-

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bers of the Liberty Club. You met Emma Goldman—who turned out to be one of your few true comrades—at one of her lectures in Cleveland in the Spring of 1901, and then visited with her that Summer at the home of Abraham Isaak, publisher of the newspaper *Free Society*. With them, and others, you expressed your disappointment in Cleveland's socialists. Before you could get much closer to finding deeper associations, some anarchists turned on you, publishing stories that you were a spy, an agent provocateur, and were only "pretending to be greatly interested in the cause, asking for names or soliciting aid for acts of contemplated violence." Some pressed for your expulsion from anarchism, as if that's even possible. This pales in comparison to their later denunciation of you, again proving the short-sightedness and cowardice of many anarchists. Some of these same types of public relations-oriented anarchists in my time would prefer to fill potholes in city streets to keep up the infrastructure of society and look reasonable rather than putting holes in politician's heads (or abdomen, as in the case of ol' Willy boy) to help destroy it... a sad reality, then and now.

And that brings me to that fateful and glorious event, the pinnacle in your life, one that few of us ever reach. On August 31, 1901, according to my research, you traveled to Buffalo, New York, where the Pan-American Exposition would bring together many heads of state. You rented a room in Nowak's Hotel and, after a week of recognizance,

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on that late-Summer day in Buffalo, September the 6th, the emerging world power was served a blow from one of the lowest of low to the man on the top—a song that rings forever in my heart—when you permanently ventilated their Commander-in-Chief, President William McKinley. Less than a year into his second term, McKinley viewed himself as a person of the people, and enjoyed regularly meeting the public at major events. Although the Secretary to the President, George B. Cortelyou, feared an assassination attempt during the Pan-American Exposition and twice canceled the President's appearance, luckily, McKinley stubbornly objected.

Your first attempt to get close enough to him proved unsuccessful, but since you viewed him as a clear symbol of the inherently oppressive system, in direct conflict with your ideals as an anarchist, you persevered. Returning with a concealed .32 caliber Iver Johnson Safety Automatic revolver purchased a few days earlier, you approached McKinley, who was greeting people in a receiving line inside the Temple of Music. At 4:07pm, you reached the front of the line. As the he extended his soft hand, you slapped it aside and shot the scumbag in the stomach twice at point blank range. The first round ricocheted off of one of his metal coat buttons and lodged in McKinley's coat, while the second seriously wounded him by entering his abdomen, and was never located.

Sadly, your escape was blocked by do-gooder citizens

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in the crowd who immediately attacked you as McKinley collapsed. You were taken into custody and briefly held at Buffalo's 13th Precinct before being transferred to police headquarters. Soon after being arrested, someone quoted you saying, "I killed President McKinley because I done my duty. I didn't believe one man should have so much service, and another man should have none." That's dope! Of course, they immediately arrested many anarchists and tried to link you to other anarchists, including Emma Goldman, whom they briefly arrested. While she was one of the few to have your back, she was not involved. You were alone in your courage. Initially your target seemed to be recovering, but as you were being transferred from the police headquarters to the Erie County Women's Penitentiary, he took a turn for the better; the bacterial world mingled with his punctured tissue, his wounds became gangrenous, and by early the next morning, no more of that precious element we call oxygen was wasted on his worthless body.

On September 16th, you were arraigned at the Erie County Jail, where a grand jury indicted you on one count of first-degree murder. You were transferred to Auburn State Prison, where you spoke freely with other captives and guards about your life, ideas, and actions, but refused to speak to either the expert psychiatrists attempting to test your sanity nor the well-known judge-turned-lawyer scum assigned to you. You attempted to plead guilty, but

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the judge overruled your simple honesty. Your trial began nine days after McKinley died, and lasted just eight hours, including the mere thirty-minute deliberation. Everyone involved, from judge to jury to defense attorneys to the public, saw the trial as a mere formality on route to the electric chair, but of course, you expected no less when you were loading your gun just over two weeks earlier. On October 29, 1901, before three jolts of 1,800 volts each were sent through your body, you calmly stated, “I killed the President because he was the enemy of the good people—the good working people. I am not sorry for my crime. I am sorry I could not see my father.” 7:14 a.m. was when you left this world.

Even in death, they tried to humiliate you and strip your dignity, as one of your brothers who witnessed your execution was not allowed to take your earthly shell home for burial. Instead, it was autopsied and a death mask was made of your face. Your body’s final resting place is somewhere in the prison grounds. Sulfuric acid was poured over your corpse so that it would be completely disfigured, while your clothes and possessions were incinerated to discourage exhibitions of you... as they tried to erase a life that could never be forgotten.

Theodore Roosevelt, McKinley’s replacement as figurehead for the American Empire, denounced you and anarchism in general in his speech to Congress, from his elevated and vulnerable position. Soon after, Congress

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passed a law “excluding from the US any person who disbelieves in or is opposed to all organized governments” and officially charged the Secret Service with the responsibility for protecting the President. Roosevelt declared, “When compared with the suppression of anarchy, every other question sinks into insignificance.” Sadly, they took the opportunity—that moment that you opened up—more seriously than most anarchists did.

Emma Goldman went into hiding when it became clear that the police were trying to link her to your action. She was caught but soon released due to insufficient evidence against her. For supporting you, she received a tremendous share of negative publicity, marginalization, and disdain from many so-called anarchists. Most anarchists and radicals were unwilling to support her effort to aid your case or honor you in postmortem, believing that you had blemished anarchism, acted foolishly, recklessly, and harmed the cause. No apologies to these side-liners who spend years crafting demotivating rhetoric and philosophies, nor to the cowards who attempt to mimic them. Those who spend a life both explaining in detail what is wrong with this world, and just as much time justifying inactivity, or worse, reformation—they are enemies of anarchists. Those who put their lives and freedom at risk to change the physical world and who do not separate themselves from their actions and from freedom itself, are our friends. They are rare, as most,

passed a law “excluding from the US any person who disbelieves in or is opposed to all organized governments” and officially charged the Secret Service with the responsibility for protecting the President. Roosevelt declared, “When compared with the suppression of anarchy, every other question sinks into insignificance.” Sadly, they took the opportunity—that moment that you opened up—more seriously than most anarchists did.

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inevitably, choose the comfortable role of theorist over the dangerous one of terrorist.

While “propaganda by the deed” lost momentum during the state’s backlash to your grand action, it continued for a while in places like Spain, where the co-optation by workerist bureaucracies had not yet taken hold. As the twentieth century unfolded, most anarchist intellectuals in Europe and North America denounced violence as “too easily used as propaganda against anarchism,” though some, like geographer Élisée Reclus, refused to project moral judgment.

“If an isolated individual filled with rage takes his revenge on a society which brought him up badly, fed him badly, advised him badly, what can I say? It is the result of terrible forces, the consequences of deep passions, the eruption of justice in its primitive phases. To take sides against the unfortunate man, and so justify, however indirectly, the system of humiliation and oppression that weighs on him and millions of his fellow men - never!”

Emile Henry, the French anarchist who detonated a bomb at the Cafe Terminus in the Parisian Gare Saint-Lazare, killing one and injuring twenty bourgeois patriots and collaborators on February 12, 1894, stated at his trial, “*You have hanged in Chicago, decapitated in Germany, garroted in Jerez, shot in Barcelona, guillotined in Montbrison and Paris, but you will never destroy anarchy. Its roots are too deep. It is born in the heart of a society that*

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is rotting and falling apart. It is a violent reaction against the established order. It represents all the egalitarian and libertarian aspirations that strike out against authority. It is everywhere, which makes it impossible to contain. It will end by killing you.”

The legacy of anarchist assassination is rich, and extends before and after your brave act, and at least one was directly inspired by you. According to a 2005 article, “The Ballot or The Bullet? Little Known (But Highly Entertaining) Assassination Trivia” by Black Powder in Issue #21 of the anti-civilization journal *Green Anarchy*: “On October of 1912, Theodore Roosevelt was on his way to address a campaign rally in Milwaukee, Wisconsin when he was shot with a .38 revolver by German immigrant John Schrank. Schrank claimed that the ghost of William McKinley came to him in a dream and told him to avenge his assignation by killing his successor, Roosevelt! The bullet smashed through Roosevelt’s eyeglasses case and his two-page speech, fractured his fourth rib and lodged into his chest. Roosevelt, famed for his “dramatic flair”, insisted on delivering his speech as planned, and only afterwards went to the hospital for treatment. He unfortunately recovered quickly, but did lose his re-election. Schrank was sent to an insane asylum.”

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killed before he could even take office! On Feb, 15, 1933, anarchist Guiseppe Zangara attempted to assassinate FDR while the President-elect was giving a speech in Miami, Florida. As he shouted, “Too many people are starving to death!” Zangara—an unemployed brick-layer—later said, “I don’t hate Mr. Roosevelt personally... I hate all officials and everybody who is rich.” Zangara, a Sicilian anarchist, had lived in New Jersey since 1924, and had only been in Miami a couple of months. According to the papers, “he was in Miami because it was warm and he was out of work, and he had lost \$200 on dog races.” It was said he had wanted to kill kings and presidents of wealthy governments since he was 17. At his sentencing he said of the President-elect, “*I decided to kill him to make him suffer. I want to make it 50-50. Since my stomach hurt I want to make even with capitalists by kill the Pesident. My stomach hurt long time.*” A spectacularized journalistic account of Zangara is detailed in a book by Blaise Picchi entitled *The Five Weeks of Guiseppe Zangara: The Man Who Would Assassinate FDR*.

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Panorama of Auburn Prison. You are featured as a central character of Stephen Sondheim's musical *Assassins*, in which McKinley's assassination is depicted in a musical number called "The Ballad of Czolgosz". You were also portrayed on television in the *Reaper* episode "Leon" as an elusive soul from Hell with father issues, whose arms transform into large guns. The 1990 film *Slacker* also makes a poignant reference to you: your photograph hangs on the wall of an elderly anarchist in Austin, Texas, who praises your action and offers political assassination as a more interesting option for the confused guy breaking into his modest house. There are many other references, too many to detail. For those looking for sites celebrating rupture in the social order (however temporary), a stone marker in the median of Fordham Drive, a residential street in Buffalo, marks the estimated spot (42°56.321'N 78°52.416'W) where your final free act was done (The Temple of Music was demolished in November 1901, along with the rest of the Exposition grounds).

Finally, let's get back to the subject of artistic expression, for example a recent local instillation. There is a statue of William McKinley on the central square of Arcata, a town in Northern California. A few years ago some civic-minded liberals petitioned the local government to take this statue down. My immediate artistic vision was to add to the exhibit rather than removing it (perhaps raising money for the materials through bake sale and

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bank robbery). I proposed a new statue of you alongside McKinley, complete with your trusty revolver (which is now on display in the Pan-American Exposition exhibit at the Buffalo History Museum). I've never fired a .32 Caliber Iver Johnson revolver, but if I someday do, you will be in my thoughts as we join together in a spirit of freedom. Long live anarchy!

revoltingly yours,
Invecchiare Selvatico

P.S. It should also be noted, that while they were far from anarchist in their ideals and actions, just over one hundred years to the day after your delicious deed, a small group of people committed an act of violence against the American Empire of great relevance, and, perhaps most importantly, of a quite satisfying aesthetic quality that could not be dismissed and will never be forgotten. They took a couple shots at two towering figures of the empire, and those two symbols also did not get back up. Perhaps you smiled on that day too. Cheers!

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some may overlap with yours
of destruction and of health

Got 20/20 Visions
show me yours, i'll show mine
and in this world of ours
we'll have no use for time

Got 20/20 Visions
hope speaks a motionless lie
active negation and moment creation
the only thoughts of mine

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though i may be confused
my last push for freedom
with nothing left to lose

nazel pickens
(dec. 2019)

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You Ask Why Your Cities are Burning?

Twenty generations of bondage
of slavery
of degradation

... and you ask why your cities are burning

Twenty generations of genocide
of stolen land

... and you ask why your cities are burning
of dehumanization

Twenty generations of lies
of broken promises

... and you ask why your cities are burning
of broken backs

Twenty generations of greed and wealth
built on others' sweat

... and you ask why your cities are burning
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Twenty generations of not-so-hidden agendas
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Twenty generations of destruction
taking our water
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Twenty generations of ugliness
grids and order
uniforms and steel
... and you ask why your cities are burning

Twenty generations of knees on our necks
bullets in our heads
poison in our bodies
... and you ask why your cities are burning

Twenty generations of your laws
your jails
your schools
... and you ask why your cities are burning

Twenty generations of crushed dreams
of manufactured madness
of unconsolable sadness
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Twenty generations of suppressed rage
 of paternalistic pacification
 of materialistic intoxication
 ... and you ask why your cities are burning
 through a world of the living
 when once we walked free
 Twenty times twenty generations of deadness
 ... and you ask why your cities are burning
 in the name of your gods
 with your wars
 Twenty times twenty generations of brutality
 ... and you ask why your cities are burning
 of rape
 of abuse
 Twenty times twenty generations of sickness
 ... and you ask why your cities are burning
 with guns and swords
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All I have to ask at this late hour
as cities burn
with nothing to lose
... what took so goddamn long?

Invecchiare Selvatico

79

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Living and Breathing Anarchy:
Relationships of the Unique Against
Organized Deadness

*"You know that old trees just grow stronger, and old
rivers grow wilder every day, but old people just
grow lonesome waiting for someone to say hello in
there"*

John Prine

*The following tangents have been translated and transcribed
from the scribblin's and ramblin's found in a secluded winter
cabin:*

In many vital and profound ways, it could be said that
we are animated into this haphazardly confusing jour-
ney alone and finish our last stroke in much the same
solitary way... from the rhythmic rockin' of the cradle
to the somber rolling of the Hearse, the goin' up, the co-
min' down, darkness to light and back to darkness and all
the gray-spotted matters in between, our paths are our
own... What we wander through and wonder in, how-
ever, is another matter. We are the core of our universe,
our own unique selves, our subjective peculiar beings,
that only we truly understand and to which we owe the

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only ultimate allegiance and authority. Our pleasures, pains, sustenance, ideas, projects, and relations are ultimately our own responsibilities. While an infinite array of factors affect us, ultimately we are the source of our own joy, power, and despair. This much makes sense to me. This is essential in being anarchists and providers of our own freedom, autonomy, directions, and perspectives. In this way, one might view themselves as an Egoist, that is if dependence on, and defense of, a singular philosophical perspective and theoretical underpinning were necessary or even helpful in one's own personal project of freedom. A healthy injection of this sort of deeply-articulated individualism has been a tonic in the increasingly dogmatic, humanist (not to mention humorless), and in general limited discourse in anti-civilization ideas. It has been especially useful for what is basically still a Left-leaning anarchist scene in the U.S. It is also true that Egoism, from my perspective, as it has primarily been expressed in contemporary anarchist circles, has some unfortunate shortcomings and specific limitations in our lives as we come into contact with others and as part of a larger project in conflict with civilization.

After a little while, with a certain cynical ear and crookedly-suspicious eye perhaps, much of the published work and conversations with some Egoists begin, at times, to sound more like the first day at daycare, interpreted through a typewriter, a poetically verbose dictionary, and

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the torn and tattered texts written by some dead wingnut named Max. Whatever, that's fine; daycare sucks: infantile indoctrination, pissie diapers, lots of spilt milk, and mama nowhere to be found. And I appreciate the kind of wingnuts who obsessively go against specific grains from certain agendas, as long as they leave enough space for my own unique insanity and personal response to the omnipresent domesticated order we oppose daily. So, getting beyond Egoist rhetoric seems useful and healthy for an overall critique and lived activity against civilization. But, meanwhile, we are stuck between Egoist limitations on one side and a primitivist party-line that declares too absolutely the parameters of discourse, conflict, and direction, insisting on not only the terms of engagement, but also how we define them, using, at times, what seems like some sort of anthropological progressivism, promoting an essential, positive, and egalitarian human nature, and offering a somewhat naive route for return. This Primitivism uses any perceived nihilistic realism and repositioning based on the world we now inhabit, as a target and scapegoat for humanist tendencies, and delusions of hope... and rarely prioritizing the individual. It is between these diverging ideological positions (Egoist and Primitivist), and only there, that I am accused of being wishy-washy and sneeringly declared a "fence rider." Add those to the many ways I am misunderstood: to an average citizen I am a crazed madman seeking to destroy the world, to a

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leftist I am no doubt viewed as one step removed from a tea-partier, to your runnin'-the-mill anarchist I am an anti-social hippie devoid of any social grace, to an Egoist I am no doubt an undercover Primitivist sympathizer, to the Primitivist I am certainly under the spell of the navel-gazing Egoists, and to the Nihilists somehow I still cling to the last vestiges of hope? Well, I suppose they're all right from within the confines of their particular ideologies. But from the place where I stand—actually, from the unpredictable rapids I ride, headed straight for an uncharted and bottomless waterfall—I am floating, I am being, I am drowning, I am battling, I am swimming, I belong, unapologetically and alive. This is not any footnoted research paper or foaming-at-the-mouth diatribe. Smashing against the rocks of ideas, swirling in currents of joy, being pulled under by the unfortunate tides of self-doubt, treading in uncharted eddies, diving for treasures, and spraying into the mist of oblivion... all at once, knowingly and willingly and yet uncontrollably and uncertain. Living and breathing anarchy.

All of this hints toward the simple and obvious fact that we are not within a vacuum of ourselves and our ideas, but instead, dwelling in a living context, We are affected by it, and offer our own unique influence to it in ways that go deeper than any singular or collected analytical explanations or stories can scratch the surface of. Glimmers or slices of this context may be viewed from various angles

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and scopes, each offering their own perspective into the living collage from which we base our reality and our movements through it. At most, we can only temporarily focus certain lenses on specific circumstances or layers for analysis and interplay. For instance, the lenses and criteria through which we view, feel, and experience the groups of people around us, or the alchemy of the chemical combinations we ingest, or the people we love, or the wars we wage, or the bacterias in our gut, really any situation or context. As animated living matter, some might call this gaze and attempted understanding of these accumulations as peeking into our relationship to ecology and the study of the complex relations between living organisms and the environments we inhabit. Like the water I drink to nourish myself, unfiltered from what is more less a swamp, alive, dynamic, changing, free, comprising infinite relationships that have become part of me now for over a decade—versus society's two-part hydrogen and one-part oxygen molecules pumped through pipes under town from the toilet to the tap: determined, stagnant, controlled, organized deadness to keep the tools clean, crops watered, and sheep functioning. But as we shake off the detritus of domestication and its unrelieved misery of decaying death—death not only in material physicality, but in spirit—as we attempt to deeply breath with the vitality of life, perhaps the dead ways of thinking, feeling, and being can be finally discarded and we may approach an ongoing and complex

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ecological understanding, one of relationship between unique beings against organized deadness.

Anyway, none of any of this has anything to do with society, which is about organizing deadness. I do not offer these thoughts as incitement for societal change or movement towards something, or even linear analysis or critique. They are merely some personal observations for others to do with as they wish. The process of domestication warps and twists in so many ways, it strips, reconstitutes, and reconfigures; it unifies us into the drudgery of a soulless mass of roles—workers, consumers, believers, citizens, activists, spectators, and purveyors of social media “likes”—and disconnects us from more meaningful, less-mediated relations. Letting go of ourselves, at least temporarily, might be a healthy and needed remedy to the alienated and mediated reality of the modern disconnected and compartmentalized world. Once essential and uncompromising sovereignty is declared, taken to heart, and actualized daily, perhaps obsessing on ourselves doesn’t really have much to offer, nor does painting a simple picture of a golden era that we could be superimposed back into. What clarifies who and where we are is when, where, and with whom we can let go of what we hold so dear... and the limits we place on what could be.

As I write these words, snow falls on the mountain I call home. I feel almost completely removed from the alienating and fracturing technologically-socialized

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nightmare of deadness, and deeply connected to the frozen crystalline flakes that fall chaotically in piles around the garden and into the forest. I feel no need to define myself against these flakes, nor do I want to be a drift of snow. I am a unique and vital part of this scene, a peculiar thread in an ever-changing tapestry, yet still somehow approaching relative meaninglessness to it all. So, where does this lead? How is it relevant? How can we meaningfully explain our meaninglessness? One might simply say that we are considering a plurality of individuals with a gathering of freedoms: anarchy. I don't know how this might look for others; it will always be dependent on the desires and situations of those involved. Even to express my experience is temporal and shallow, especially with those clumsy brutal hammers called words. But, one way to look at our spirit*, for instance, is as our unmediated authentic self (one that's not segmented and compartmentalized into the various roles and expectations of society) in relation to the unmasked understanding and reality of what is outside us: connection. To move through the baggage of domestication, we need to look not only inward—to understand who we may actually be—but also, just as relevant, outward. Ecstasy is said to be the experience of being outside one's self, and a life that is both grounded in who we are and at the same time ecstatic seems to me more authentic and ecological.

But as I grow older, I become less interested in, and

nightmare of deadness, and deeply connected to the frozen crystalline flakes that fall chaotically in piles around the garden and into the forest. I feel no need to define myself against these flakes, nor do I want to be a drift of snow. I am a unique and vital part of this scene, a peculiar thread in an ever-changing tapestry, yet still somehow approaching relative meaninglessness to it all. So, where does this lead? How is it relevant? How can we meaningfully explain our meaninglessness? One might simply say that we are considering a plurality of individuals with a gathering of freedoms: anarchy. I don't know how this might look for others; it will always be dependent on the desires and situations of those involved. Even to express my experience is temporal and shallow, especially with those clumsy brutal hammers called words. But, one way to look at our spirit*, for instance, is as our unmediated authentic self (one that's not segmented and compartmentalized into the various roles and expectations of society) in relation to the unmasked understanding and reality of what is outside us: connection. To move through the baggage of domestication, we need to look not only inward—to understand who we may actually be—but also, just as relevant, outward. Ecstasy is said to be the experience of being outside one's self, and a life that is both grounded in who we are and at the same time ecstatic seems to me more authentic and ecological.

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more impatient and hostile towards the shortcomings of the society that surrounds and creeps in from outside of our fortified compound and secluded, off-the-map watershed. I grow tired of draining, inauthentic, and coerced interactions, and the expectations that come with them. I grow tired of humanity (not necessarily individuals), the accumulation of deadness, the piles of refuse, the non-ecological. I grow tired of the laziness, repetition, and boredom that passes for critique, and the insistence to dwell almost solely within ideas without much application to our lived experience. Even writing these lines feels hypocritical, adding to the proliferation of anarchist words as opposed to anarchist being. Right now, for me, the only relevant methods of anarchist discourse are first, the dialogues that challenge, interact, twist and turn, and that fruit lived activity, and second, certain well-articulated communiqués, after the fact. But, for this moment, I revert, and fill these pages with my current tangents, thoughts, and perspectives, to relations whom I care deeply about, and to possible future accomplices, in hopes of moving towards an actualized anarchy against domestication—both in our daily lives and in a larger continual momentum against civilization—without delusions of self-aggrandizing hope, strangulating ideologies, or the approval of any so-called experts, scenes, or movements.

I would never dream of arguing against declaring and defining the absolute sovereignty and prime regard

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of the self, but for me enough time, energy, and ink has been spent on it. To me, what is more interesting, and can be most useful, is where and how these autonomous wills collide, overlap, join together, get lost within, run alongside, diverge from, and break apart. These relationships are what make life more than a solitary and alien endeavor, more than an abstract game, more than a vacuous self-referential dead-end... They make it ecstatic, emotional, delightful, sorrowful, and authentic. I wish to play with unchartable, unstable, unexplainable concepts like love or the indescribable connection one might feel to a certain melody in relation to a rhythm or any temporary dissociative state of being. I am not speaking of any sort of "oneness with everything" or harmony to be joined with, but the infinite assortment of relationships drawn from each free will, ones that penetrate deeply, past the lines we draw, through the masks, in between the cracks, into a place we rarely allow ourselves to go: unmapped, unsafe, mysterious, sacrilegious, and unpredictable. In a word, wild.

Also, while I agree that concepts of absolute truth and essentialist nature are false constraints placed on the self for the external goals of an other (in most cases, the dominant culture over the individual), many Egoists might also argue that there is no personal essence of any kind, that we are nothing but what we chose to do or be at any given time. This dispirited nothingness may appear to offer complete freedom, but in fact, removes any context

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to move through and relate to, presenting a detachment and subjectivity that is not too dissimilar from the alienated context promoted by the society we currently inhabit. Are we supposed to float meaninglessly through a world of objects and ideas? A life free from the constraint and deadening principles of faith, belief, morals, dogmatic presuppositions, or fixed standpoints does not necessitate being devoid of deep connections and a sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves, on our own terms. In my mind, this is a place for critical exploration. It is also a space for letting go of ourselves in certain aspects, not in relation to the apparatus of domestication, but with those individuals and situations we choose. In terms of connection to other unique beings, I do not believe the choice is merely between an ethics that sets as its goal the benefit, pleasure, or greatest good of oneself alone, versus some purely altruistic, self-less, duty-filled universal role in a larger plan. At times, in certain situations, on mutual terms, the blurring of lines between ourselves and others can provide not only for a mutual understanding upon which lived activity can dwell, but also shared joy in deep relation, something gravely missing in most people's lives. The easy part is declaring the autonomy of the individual, the more useful and perhaps more pleasurable and fulfilling project that I would propose is the exploration and gathering of unique beings, the relationship of freedoms, and their revolt against organized deadness.

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This is where my journey currently takes me.
 Anyway, enough about this, i gotta go, i wanna play
 in the snow with the kids.

Living and breathing anarchy...

*As a random side note and inebriated nod to the spirits out
 there who enter our lives and our livers.....our liver not only
 supposedly secretes bile as an important function in metabo-
 lism and production of red blood cells, essential to our life, but
 it is also thought by some to be the seat of our emotions and de-
 sires, that which makes us unique, some might say our essence.
 Could feeding our lives, drenching our livers, with these spirits
 somehow fit into an ecological perspective? That question will
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Dust on My Boots

gonna lay myself down
with dust on my boots
bones gonna crumble
skin harden'd leather
ramblin' this world
without chain or tether

gonna lay myself down
with dust on my boots
cover up my footprints
gonna leave no trace
just scrambled words
crooked smile on my face

gonna lay myself down
with dust on my boots
don't need no bible
don't want no laws
gonna live my own way
with stumbles and falls

gonna lay myself down
with dust on my boots
come high or come low

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come high or come low

Nazel Pickens

...leave me alone

... all alone

go up and go down
gonna ride this ol' bronco
like a damn rodeo clown
gonna lay myself down
with dust on my boots
give no apologies
no empty regrets
with my gun in hand
and my boots facin' west
gonna lay myself down
with dust on my boots
worms eat my flesh
crows pick my bones
i've loved many
but we leave this world alone

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Cries Against Humanity: A Prologue to Hopelessness

As I wake from the torturous slumber of a thousand nightmares, nothing remotely resembling the vibrant deep sleep of luscious dreams, all that is left to do, all that we've ever really had to do, is to live, live our vitally potent lives on our own terms, despite, against, and elusive to this idea called humanity. There is only bubbling putrid bile left in me for this fabricated and forced social conglomeration they tell me I must be a part of. Much of the time, most of us acquiesce to its hypnotically oppressive pull. But each day it becomes more and more difficult to keep my disgust from erupting. However potentially cathartic that might be, it might also swallow me whole. And, despite some corroded residue of wanting to belong, to connect, to be part of a long lineage of perpetual change ("change" in the all-encompassing non-valued understanding, bringing any speckle of beauty to the most hideous of stories), despite its barely-concealed false promises and occasionally surprising sparkles, I have no hope for humanity. I have only exasperated cries, of sorrow and pain and of anger and disdain. Despite my deepest desires, a seemingly permanent drought and desertification of my soul has set in, and my tears have run dry, stolen from me by the heat of compounded atrocity and by the apathetic in the shadows who have allowed it.

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Humanity, you disappoint me beyond any rational explanation, beyond the most unbounded imagining, beyond even the most perverse belief. It's overwhelming to comprehend the complete incompetence, the lack of responsibility, the utter disdain for freedom that you reveal, that you have always revealed, and that you will most likely always reveal. Your oblivious and arrogant disconnect from life is appalling and I cannot relate to it on any meaningful level, at least not any longer. My life is not yours and my true accomplices-in-living are among the rocks and rain and mushrooms and jaguars and trees and moon, and the few remaining individual humans-being...and maybe some viruses too.

So, I reject Humanity.

I reject your weaknesses and your cowardice. I reject your general laziness and lack of creativity. I reject your willingness to be subjugated, and to be a part of the subjugation of others. I reject your hideous aesthetics and love of progress. I reject your self loathing and your faith in systems, institutions, and technocratic solutions. I reject your general lack of desire, wonder, humor, pleasure, and joy, all that makes my life worth living.

but...

But I embrace myself, all of my innate and fluid qualities, desires, and emotions. And I welcome those people who also embrace themselves and all of their unique qualities, desires, and emotions outside of the dictates of

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humanity. I continue to act and react with the wild and chaotic forces of our world—not with the world we’ve been told we live in, encouraged by violence (active, passive, and perceived), and always to be resisted, escaped, evaded, undermined, and attacked. And I cherish deeply the stories of those who resist and live on their own terms.

I am generally indifferent to those who appear to have neither a positive nor negative direct affect on me and my relations. Maybe a few of them will be future conspirators, some of them will probably be enemies at some point, but most will just be benign tumors who may not pose impending damage or termination on me and those I care about, but may still, however, annoy, inflict occasional aches and pains (physically, emotionally, aesthetically, etc), irritating if only for being “first-world” arrogant idiots, a group that can include most of us. Of course, I also factor specific repressions, social dynamics, cultural biases, with those lower on the domesticated food chain possibly deserving more time or space, but not across the board or from an essentialist agenda, since I value individuals based on ongoing social dynamics and personal characteristics, not objectifications claimed by outside sources. And, I also hold in my saddened heart the expectation that most non-human life is justifiably repulsed by our kind.

I do not foresee or even hope that the trajectory of humanity (and my relationship to it) will do anything but worsen, based on contemporary and historical events,

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trends, and motivations. And while undercurrents of rebellion exist and have value for their own sake, I am also without much hope as to any significant proposed deviation or dismantling. But my dreams could never be captured and confined by their inevitable spectacle and parameters.

As a whole, I reject Humanity.

I reject any singular idea, belief, plan, proposal, concept, action, or feeling that will undo this mess. Most will only make things much worse, as they are informed by and limited to the confines of their world. They are pipe dreams at best, or at worst, authoritarian nightmares of the not-so-distant future.

But don't mistake me for a bloodthirsty, deranged hater. Sure, there are certain enemies whose blood I long to see overflowing the gutters of revenge. Yes, I have some well-worn cracks and twists in my psyche, as do we all from being born into this world. And, of course, the potency of hate is one of the many motivators in my diverse arsenal, sometimes the only available one. But I also have what the simple-minded, pigeon-holing, and uncritical plan-pushers might mistake as "positive visions," often inspired by the spirits and the vapors. There are concepts, people, stories, and situations that I support and embrace, like those beings with whom I may have authentic relationships outside of the anthropocentric mind, despite the overwhelming and damaging baggage of civilization, under the scars from society's pliers, beneath the masks of

trends, and motivations. And while undercurrents of rebellion exist and have value for their own sake, I am also without much hope as to any significant proposed deviation or dismantling. But my dreams could never be captured and confined by their inevitable spectacle and parameters.

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identity, through the brutal armor of domestication, and yes, I still believe in our connection to the chaotic forces of creation and destruction, the momentum that can create spaces for the unexpected, moments of joyous revenge, battles of unleashed fury, and just maybe, uncontrollable colossal waves to wipe clean this blood-stained slate.

I reject Humanity.

And blood will always be spilt. Some people remember that, while others are never allowed to forget it. But for some, it's been way too long since they were reminded, participated, felt it, drank it. Regardless, the dammed forces cannot be held back forever and the scarlet floods of freedom will pour out once again—not in any uniform, predictable, or controllable way, but in playful splatters, violent torrents, soothing pulses, and seepage through cracks.

It's alright ma, I'm only bleeding, and from that blood, mixed with piss, shit, cum, tears, bile, sweat, and breath, new relationships may grow on our terms, from our world, in our own lives.

Yes, I reject Humanity.

Humanity and its civilized logic are global, and so is my critique of it and hatred for it.

So, I reject Humanity.

I do not reject all individual humans-being, and sometimes, I may even love you.

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ps. I think that's why I have always loved country music. No, not Nashville, country music; songs of love lost, heartache, loneliness, despair, anger, deceit, rebellion, a longing for simpler and more autonomous times before (mythical and skewed as those visions may be at times) and the various spirits and addictions that rural people (whether working or trying to avoid it) have used to cope with this dysfunctional world, when all one really longs for is connection, to the earth, to ourselves, and to each other, with some poetic rugged individualist freedom fueling it! Yes, a few of my heroes have always been cowboys. No apologies.

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The Other Side of the Sky

On The Other Side Of The Sky
Lookin' inside my dreamin' eyes
A foreign world is familiar too
Where rage cools to a paler blue
My sorrows burn fire-flamed red
And the frenetic spirals of life
Turn toward the eternal flowin' dead

On The Other Side Of The Sky
On soft carpets of clover I lie
Circles straighten and mind a-bendin'
While each song is forever endin'
But the tune never really stops
The turtle's runnin' backwards
And I have to throw up.

On The Other Side Of The Sky
Where I am once again born to die
Walkin' out the door to get back home
Under the sky of a fluffy livin' loam
Rememberin' everything to forget it all
My hands spin in all directions
While the clock is fallin' off the wall

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Invecchiare Selvatico

On The Other Side Of The Sky
 With no answers but a certain WHY
 The Old Black Sun shines from below
 And creative disintegrations grow
 Mother moths return to darkened flame
 Jaguars dance the endless wheel
 Returnin' from where they never came

On The Other Side Of The Sky
 Cool water turns to spirited rye
 My mule walks sideways on two legs
 And coyote lays more copper eggs
 Backwards the buffalo forever roam
 As the rainbow shatters into black
 I understand the illusions of the starry dome

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Can Bricks Break Diametrics? On Decapitating Two-Dimensional Binary Thinking

As I collect my arsenal of bricks from a crumbling foundation and draw my slightly-rusted battle axe (a late-night-heavily-chewed no.2 pencil), I prepare to take on the colossal goal of decapitating two-dimensional binary thinking, a polarizing beast that has for too long wreaked immeasurable havoc on our world while seducing virtually every last of its human inhabitants.

What I refer to as two-dimensional thinking is the dominant mode of interacting with the civilized world. By this I simply mean, as so many before me have elaborated on (more eloquently and profoundly), the diametrical perspective of binary thinking. Currently, this tendency seems more dramatic and extreme than ever, despite rhetoric and superficial activism claiming the contrary. As we know, this mode of comprehension and expression is nothing new. In fact, it could be said to be the dominant analytical, emotional, and spiritual dictate of civilization itself, what has lead us to this horrific world of cold, detached deadness that we now inhabit. But I wish to move outside the simplistic hyper-exaggerated polarized politics, beliefs, and values of this time: the either/or thinking of Left/Right, Fascist/Antifa, Liked/Canceled, Victim/Oppressor, Ally/-phobe, Identity/Other, Black/White, Us/

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Them, etc, ad nausea. These represent false essentialist polarities, and encourage the absurd attempt to fit our own unique perspectives, desires, experiences, and lives within them. I want to move beyond this in my analysis, in my action, in my life.

I am an anarchist. I state this as one way to describe myself as at odds with the totality of the politicized, institutionalized, and manufactured world, not with just a part, piece, side, or section of it, but with the entire complex situation and all the multifaceted binary systems that comprise it. I reject everything in complete terms—all politics, ideologies, and morals—not from one side or angle, but in its entirety. There is no specialist, graph, chart, spectrum, or algorithm to objectively determine a correct position of blame, response, or perspective. All politicians, technocrats, intellectuals, clergy, and activists, as I see it, deserve absolute disdain and rejection, as do we all, in varying degrees and situations of compliance and collaboration, which are to be determined by each of us from our unique perspectives rather than from an agenda-driven, over-arching, and polarized collective position. Because of this, some might think of me as a nihilist. In this, they reveal their own limitations. They say I took the black pill, but I ate them all like candy. Yes, I reject that which devalues me, that which is not part of who I am or that I am not a part of. I reject their world and seek no place in it. I reject their opportunistic offers of positions or that I am not a part of. I reject their world and seek no place in it. I reject their opportunistic offers of positions

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on all sides of their perpetual war on the impulses of life and freedom, as well as their glittering offers of potential power, both of which are valueless outside of their game. I fully embrace my own unique self, and those I am in relationships with (to varying degrees and in unique ways), and, in a more general sense, those who might be future collaborators in freedom, and, of course, in the indescribable spiraling chaos of life. I embrace this chaotic openness and its creative and destructive qualities... Whoops, there I go again, diametrically challenged, old habits I'm tryin' to break. We'll just say, life's chaotic process of openness. Communicating can be confusing for the domesticated human within the garbage of this world, within the confines of Their language, and with the use of Their tools. We have been taught from day one to think and express in this polarized mode. I'm clumsily trying to move beyond that, back from that, in spite of that. I'm sometimes left pondering if a personalized destruction may be one of the few modes available to sidestep the binary process, as I smear my organically produced feces as graffiti on their cold dead walls. And as I half-jokingly ask, can bricks break diametrics?

By attempting to move beyond two-dimensional thinking, I am not suggesting third positions, moderate middle-ground considerations, or post-modern escapist rationalizations, but rather, hinting at a combination of unexpected and exaggerated explosions from all quarters,

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with nuanced, localized, and personalized details. Applying deep, ancient, timeless lessons, but in unmapped territories without precedents. This is not merely thinking outside the box, but blowing up their box into unrecognizable dust, without forgetting what the box was made of, who made it, and why... and possibly gathering a pinch of this dust in a jar for use in some possible antivirus. I am suggesting long meditative sessions on simple questions and instinctive reactions to complicated ones. Holding firm to who I am while jumping into the unknown. Replacing concepts of safety, correctness, and truth with more useful and meaningful understandings; unique experiences, authentic emotions, unmediated desires, deeply-intertwined relationships, energizing tensions, and lucid dreams. Accepting that we really don't have a fuckin' clue, without being paralyzed by this realization. Embracing what appears to be contradictory feedback and skewed overlaps... scraps of long-forgotten mismatched materials weaving new and vibrant textures. We have been here many many times each moment, but never in a lifetime. I want to collapse the dream into life and explode life into dreams.

A less poetic description of navigating around the binary structuring of reality might be in order... ha ha. It seems that more useful ways of understanding specific situations and dynamics might be achieved through integrating intuition, reason, humor, sensuality, and imagination, with the hope of developing a more holistic continuum

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and wide spectrum of strategy, tactics, action, and assessment. Exploring and playing with the associations between internal and external understandings and the various tensions between supposedly opposing rationalizations—instead of choosing an either/or approach—may facilitate openings and connections of apparently unrelated parts of a problem. This might help in finding more creative resolutions in complex situations that contain diverging individual conceptions, which are more useful together than on their own. It can create new, more open, options rather than choosing between allegedly opposing ones, as it considers more variables, not just a subset of presumed ones, and can capture the complicated, multi-faceted, and multidirectional relationships between variables. It treats situations as complex webs or goo, rather than as isolated abstractions or sums of parts. It considers most details of a problem or situation to be at least somewhat fluid and organic, and rather than generalizing and oversimplifying, it allows us to consider alternative views and contradictory data, and embrace a more complex understanding of interconnections and influences. By avoiding careless or ideological limitations, oversimplifications, or linear conclusions, we can open ourselves to multi-directional, self-nurturing, and complex dimensions.

Either/or and absolutist thinking appears to be a semi-automatic learned reaction that encourages us to falsely generalize situations between extremes, without

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Either/or and absolutist thinking appears to be a semi-automatic learned reaction that encourages us to falsely generalize situations between extremes, without

pausing to examine the nuances. Nor does it encourage instinctual responses, from an unalienated base, but instead operates through manufactured cognitive distortions and misconceptions. This distorted information, these irrational fears, oversimplified understandings, and misdirected emotions, lead us to dysfunctional distress and anxiety. The either/or thinker puts every isolated event, situation, or perspective into pre-packaged boxes, often categorizing different realities together. Absolute words like “nothing”, “everything”, “never”, and “always” are inconceivable for nuanced descriptions or understandings, and indicate that someone is thinking, or at least arguing, simplistically. People’s identities can be built around these extreme simplifications, closing off or misrepresenting details that challenge these assumptions, and people who do this often adopt a victim role: Us against Everything Else. People who identify mainly as victims are the spectators to their own pain, projecting their learned and ingrained polarized thinking on the world and refusing to take responsibility for their lives.

In no way am I denying that life is made up of an unending series of real choices, from the casual, minuscule, and insignificant, to the dramatic, pivotal, and life-altering. And there truly are existential questions to ponder for each of us. I just don’t think these choices are best based on polarized thinking, or the expectation of answers. My questions are the guides of my unique paths, not seeking

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solidified conclusions cementing a super highway to the absoluteness of knowing. We move through this world making partial decisions based on circumstances and situations, some more grounded and concrete than others. Modern philosophers often emphasize dramatic life-defining decisions. This may be warranted at some critical points and situations, but only when honestly informed by a lifetime of nuanced and fluid underpinnings. Typically, however, this emphasis is unnecessarily pressuring and often counterproductive and makes for unreasonable expectations for daily choices. An agnostic radical uncertainty would straddle this chasm with a critical and open eye, rather than with either the cowardly fence-sitting or the deeply entrenched positions of the lazy and safe. This could be useful in the seemingly non-overlapping explanations in the realms between science and spirituality, exemplified by some forms of Taoist and certain neo-Pagan explorations. This is also helpful in obtaining valuable insight, and even inspiration, from pieces of larger bodies of ideas and realms that we want little or nothing to do with in their full form.

False dilemmas or false dichotomies dishonestly present either/or as the only option. Rising from accident, omission, or deliberate agenda-driven deception, false dichotomies insist on clear and complete answers, with limited facts infused with unwarranted density. Assumptions and prejudices often produce false dichotomies and

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unsubstantiated impressions of mutual exclusivity, and bolster ideological or biased provocations, which “every-one agrees about.” The binary opposition, or pair of related concepts in opposition, is systematized in language as and/or thought, in which two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another as mutually exclusive. Most linguistic and philosophical positions see these types of distinctions as fundamental to all language and knowledge, and typically, most people prioritize one of the two opposites, usually informed by cultural determinants which reinforce their specific overarching moral codes. Bias is structuralized. Yet the exact value or dynamic of these distinctions, in reference to each other, can be dissected differently. Structuralism, for example, views binary opposition as the means by which the factors of language have value or meaning. Rather than view opposition as a contradictory relation, it sees it as structural and complementary, with each unit defined in reciprocal determination with other terms.

Political binaries, as post-structuralists have pointed out, perpetuate and add social legitimacy to systems of oppression that favor the dominant and controlling power structure. As post-structuralists correctly explain, what is necessary is not simply a reversal of poles, but an apolitical deconstruction in which the binary contradicts and undermines itself. This is possible through critical analysis on all levels and throughout all dynamics. While this was an

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In the psychological realm, the concept of “splitting” refers to the inability to synthesize the perceived positive and negative qualities of a situation, idea, or person. Often attributed to an individual’s inability to integrate both good qualities and bad qualities in an individual or situation, it often begins with conflict about parents, and can lead to various defense mechanisms, lopsided extremes in mood, and traumatically unstable relationships. These individuals are frequently described as having “dramatic fluctuations” between love and hate, and are sometimes referred to as “borderline personalities”. Narcissists, who plague us to an alarming degree in these times, often use splitting as a way to shore up their bloated sense of self-importance, vilifying those who do not share their self-idolization, or who simply do not agree with them. Just look at most of social media for a plethora of examples of this current infestation of narcissistic extremism. Depression is just one byproduct of this mode of relating, when the ex-

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expectations of these relationships are unattainable or at least not sustainable. Sometimes, a deeper split in consciousness occurs, "schizophrenia", usually understood as the result of resolving inner conflict over and over by polarizing complicated things or events into "good" and "bad" and "loved" and "hated". It is not that great of a leap to claim that the hyper-alienation, technophilia, and extremely diametrically manufactured world we live in has produced a schizophrenic culture that feeds on itself in a deteriorating spiral of mental and emotional distress, which polarizes inward and outward as a method of resolution. Add to this the toxicity and stress to the physical body that is inflicted upon us daily, and we are left with grotesque beings of split-minded distortion, the modern human.

If we look at the world we now inhabit, the technological society, binary methodology is clearly a defining principle. Technology has always been inherently alienating. Not merely tools used in accomplishing specific goals, but a system of artificial relationships which get between direct experience and goals. Its dynamic informs and dictates the user. In effect, the user is the used. The Screen is the primary interface for most humans and their world. It has no jurisdiction in life, yet most modern humans submit willingly to its baseline mediation of their world, accepting its unending diametric positions and decisions. By choice, force, fear, laziness, or ignorance, most buckle under its insipid authority. We can look to the actual pro-

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gramming of this virtual world with its seemingly unending stream of 010110010... for some insight. Even with an infinite pattern of “0” or “1” scenarios used to produce an immense artificial world, it’s still a conglomeration of binary decisions. If we honestly examine how this same binary limitation is usually applied to each of the infinitely possible decisions we make—from the insignificant and unconscious to the crucial—we can begin to understand how we typically lose sight of an entirely open landscape for our unique being, relationships, and situations. If we begin to open ourselves to this actual infinity of nuance, complexity, and uncertainty, the authentic free individual can flourish, rather than the entire system or abstract collective. This approach to being blurs the distinctions between the analytical and the emotional and spiritual realms, and the inner and other dimensional realities, something like an authentic dreamlike consciousness, as opposed to an abstract virtual one. Some argue that the either/or dynamic is part of the basic cognition of all living creatures, down to the trillions of micro-microscopic “on/off” electro-synapses of the brain. This is an oversimplification of determinist logic. Our conscious and subconscious decisions are infinitely complex, whether we recognize that or not. To distill this complexity and potential down to merely a sequence of predetermined junctures in a single road is unfortunate.

So, how is diametrical thinking expressed in to-

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day's hyper-alienated culturally-narrow techno-expressed identity-driven society? Well, let's start with one of the most glaring examples, politics. First, I must declare, I have always viewed politics as the way that dead people negotiate with each other, as opposed to the living art of relationships. It is putting intentional road blocks in front of others' desires, by creating organized agendas for them to submit to, then holding ransom those desires for an empty play on a chessboard. Politics is not our language, not our song, not our poetry, not our life—it is Their game. To engage is to collaborate and to give it relevance and power. For the last couple of centuries, much of the world has used the binary scenario of Left and Right to describe a limited scope for popular or dominant politics. While this may once have had been slightly more helpful as a shorthand way to describe situations, or agendas, it has never adequately described a lived condition. It has become even cruder and more limited, and now leads to more confusion than clarity. What might have once been a shorthand amongst people with deeper shared understandings of each other, is now empty slogans, all playing into the political world fueled on false binaries.

If we were to describe The Left as control-oriented, trustful of and dependent on government, paternalistic, narcissistic, hyper-sensitive, micro-aggressed, pro-victimization, technophilic, and progressive in a linear outlook; then The Right might generally be viewed as moralistic,

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close-minded, ethnocentric, non-empathetic, reactionary, technophobic, and static (if not regressive) in linear outlook. This simplification may superficially describe differences between the two posed binaries, and even to some degree be accurate in their respective promotions of certain public policies, but in fact, most of these qualities could easily be interchangeable depending on the circumstances, issues, and causes. This is because the groups of people who are being described are not actual binaries, as they are presented for political purposes, but are in fact on a very closely related and narrow continuum. Rhetorically they may seem opposite, but in action, and in general regard to values—like the preservation of institutions of control, the use of moral imperatives, and the weaponization of loaded concepts, for instance—they are virtually the same in operation. Most aggravating for me personally, is how they both dishonestly and rhetorically cry for “freedom” as their exclusive value, when neither has any intention of allowing it. Like the rest of the false binary narrative, that claim is necessary to maintain the political landscape in which all strive for only slight variations of the status quo, coated with rhetoric.

If we look at responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, we can see how the binary politic removes critical thinking and nuanced opinions on how to interact, and instead uses bullying and shaming. According to this logic, if you identify from the Leftist side of things, than you are inherently

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an empathetic, community-oriented, intelligent, science-driven, mask-wearing, self-sacrificing, pro-quarantining, social-distancing, health-conscious, dutiful citizen who wants to do everything possible to fight the pandemic (including demanding that everyone be forced to take a virtually untested vaccine that alters codes of messenger RNA), while anyone who disagrees with any part of the details or wants to discuss their own personal perspectives and comfort levels, than you *must* be a self-centered, dumb, conspiracy-theory duped, anti-masking, anti-quarantining, anti-vaxing, super-spreading, unhealthy deplorable who wants to do everything possible to pump the economy back up to business-as-usual, go to church, and act like a spoiled brat on steroids (and probably a racist, misogynist, homophobic, transphobic, ad nausea, too). If you are on the Right, according to this grossly simplistic logic, you view yourself as a freedom-loving, community-oriented, clear-thinking, common-sense-driven, strong, righteous, fearless, pro-economy skeptic who trusts the individual and god (not to mention the thin blue line), and anyone deviating from this absolutist line *must* be fearful, sheepish communists who want the cure to be worse than the disease to make their orange-haired leader look bad and to help usher in the United Socialists of America prison camps (with implanted chips and child molestation to boot). These same binary politics can be applied to every issue in the landscape, and are. Nuggets of truth and

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opinions are turned into weapons of agenda, while most folks are too fearful, uncritical, or just plain dumb to do anything but fall in line and regurgitate rhetoric, oh yeah, and magnify it almost infinitely on social media while persecuting any outliers. Unfortunately, even most anarchists still get trapped in these paradigms, while unconvincingly trying to explain how they don't. So, who still finds affinity with this species? Sorry, I regress. But I will warn everyone out there, if you put me on a contact list yer still a snitch and if you try to rip off my mask yer gonna get hurt, and if you are anti-anti-mandate than you are pro-authority... duh. Stay out of it. It is their absurd cultural war, not ours.

For a more localized examination of the stagnant anarchist space, we can look at the fascist and anti-fascist binary that has taken up far too much room in the public spotlight and within anarchist circles over the past few years. While on the surface these might appear to be inherently opposed, the dynamics and thought processes of both act through very similar ways. To begin with, both ideologies (like most), are inherently reactionary and are extremely limited in scope and depth. Within this, the Other (everyone else) is categorized and viewed in stark and absolute clarity. Symbols replace thoughtfulness, lines are clearly drawn, action is taken. Often neglecting to place fascism (if there is even a clear, specific, and applicable usage of this concept by most who spit out the term on social media) as one of many political, historical, and

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cultural methods of control, many seem to view it as an extreme within a generally functioning world that just needs better management.

While I am certainly down with pushing clear-cut neo-Nazis and their racist cousins out of my life and localized spheres of living in a variety of ways, from information spreading, to social pressure, to physical removal (read: whatever it takes), I have little interest in lining up on a cultural battleground that reduces everything to lowest common denominators and neglects to view things in a larger and deeper context—such as that most neo-Nazis are damaged bone-heads crippled by this system and looking for something to be a part of and someone to blame. Not that this excuses them in any way, just that there is a much deeper and more complex situation to understand and attack. This became even more clear to me when I saw Proud Boys facing up with Antifa in Portland. It looked more like a football game (and now, a paintball match) than any sort of critical anarchist intervention. If I had not looked closer at the specifics of their placards, or closely examined their tattoos, I would have a hard time telling them apart. It became obvious to me early on that while there were some good intentions on the part of some folks, mostly, this confrontation was a reactionary fallback to simplistic street-fighting, at least for most participants. Obviously, racist and fascist types present a clear problem in our world, and for some much more directly and brutally.

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tally. This certainly warrants direct response, but mostly what I have witnessed is a simple-minded moralistic reaction fueled by self-righteousness, duty, and adrenaline. Most anti-fascists are myopic in their vision, shallow in their critique, and to be honest, seem more like wanna-be-cops-in-training than anarchists. It is no wonder numerous fascist-types have come through similar columns, and sometimes move back and forth. I walk away mostly pondering the edges between passion and morality, and the need to negotiate them more thoughtfully.

Meanwhile, the world that we live in is the age of the big “I”... no, not that giant paternalistic camera in the sky, well, it’s actually not that different, just more deeply forced into culture. I mean Identity. I suppose you might say that we are in a collective identity crisis, from every direction. The projection of identity, along with the mode, process, and aesthetic of the god of our time, technology, and how these work together, seems to be one of the most defining problems of our day. Identity is always a limited, abstract, and artificial representation of one part of ourselves, not something to create authentic relationships from. At very best, identity is a very partial description, much of the time it’s a distraction, a detriment in general, and often a horrible dishonest derailing at critical junctures. Sure, we each might have some sort of general affinity with others who share a common oppression or situation in this world, but to define ourselves through that myopic bubble not only

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sells ourselves short as two-dimensional or oversimplified victims, but forms false, binary understandings that are detrimental to us all. Such an understanding creates dysfunction and ill-constructed bias, and manufactures friction between the Identity and the Other. This is the mess we dwell in today, hyper-presented and contagiously trending at pandemic proportions and instantaneous speed.

For me, the concepts of Identity and the Other, and how they come up against each other, are some of the most troubling aspects of modern interactions. These concepts fit perfectly into the detached post-modern politicized techno-reality, but are incompatible with authentic lives of deep relationships. The promotion of Identity is a vital part of the assimilation process: assessing, categorizing, and placing people has always been part of the domestication process. If people can do it to themselves, even easier and more effective. Smooth down the jagged and hairy unique edges to fit through the standardization of their hoops, and present lowest-common denominators for people to get behind and push. Intensify this through cultural institutions like academia, media, and pop culture. Politicize this, create a correct paradigm based in vaguely-articulated concepts of freedom, empathy, equity, and justice. Instill it throughout development in schools and subcultures. Flood all branches of stimuli with it. Create a complete binary of the correct and incorrect views and blindly defend that binary down to every up-to-date

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prescribed micro-detail, with prepared and approved responses to any criticism. Use pressure, shame, fear, to create insecurities in those who question or critique any part of it, and, of course, label everyone who disagrees as reactionary. Then, after this groundwork is laid, promote policy, both localized and generalized. This is the politics of Identity, something anarchists should reject at face value and in every detail. Still, many enthusiastically join in, and most at least cater to this thinking, make space for it, or close their eyes to its problems, until the behavior is too embedded and automatic to reject without devastating collateral damage. It becomes the imposed values of the newest binary version of the world we live in, like it or not. Choose a side. With us or against us. No, thanks.

Today these cultural manipulations play out most acutely in language. Language becomes the battleground for creating this new world that the activists say they want for all of us, whether we want it or not, times up. Often birthed in academia, it bleeds into sub-culture, pop culture, and traditional and social media. This proliferation happens exponentially quicker and more simplistic every moment as global trending becomes the vector for spread, with binary perspectives fed and magnified by algorithms and online social groupings. Concepts are formed, dumb-downed, branded, and assigned catch words. Saints and demons are declared, always along strict binary lines. This thinking creates a mirrored image of Good and Bad,

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meaning that the same framework is maintained even if the superficial markers are inverted. In this ever-expanding war of words, while some may feel temporarily vindicated and victorious, in every battle we all lose a little more of our uniqueness, autonomy, and depth. Meanwhile people starve, ecosystems crash, freedom is crushed. Isn't progress great?

This cultural brutality is all happening while I am still trying to be open and caring. A tough place to be, more difficult with each passing day. I use the identifiers people wish, help make room for their particular desires, and think deeply on how civilization attempts to destroy each of us against our individual uniqueness. That does not mean adopting the latest managerial methods, or participating in the deadening ordering of life, in the name of reform—much less revolution, which has always been puzzling to me. Such conformism reveals a lack of depth, a confusing need to fit into this deadness, a misplaced impulse to be different from, but also the same as, everyone else. These trends attempt to force us once again into making binary decisions, even when we are talking about rejecting such binary understandings... ahhhhhhh! In most realms fluidity is the goal, so why are the roads proposed to that goal filled with superficial choices and narrowing expectations? This enters into the matter of assimilation, another enormous problem, one requiring much more attention on its own. I will quickly say that some of the

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most unstable, potentially dangerous, and ideologically-driven people, at least in a momentary sense, are those on the verge of, or recently assimilated into, the systems of this world. This can occur as either a way to attempt to prove their legitimacy within a new context, as an uncritical response to their new circumstances, or for what they perceive as essential for their very survival. Each moment in history has its burgeoning identities-of-the-day.

This culture cannot be made better—as in free—using the same frameworks that created it. It has a disgustingly grotesque foundation, and its future can only build on this horror. Civilization is a dead cul-de-sac and it is past time to step off their sidewalk and tear up their turf despite what their authorities say—those physical, verbal, mental, emotional, and spiritual cops. I certainly have no problem embracing concepts like preference or comfort, and refuse to judge where people find it, except when it is on the terms of their domesticators. Beauty, authenticity, uniqueness, and autonomy can only exist outside of the domesticated terrain. In reference to this, I have always embraced being an outsider, freak, mutant, and deviant. The outside is wide open, despite its inherent dangers. It is a realm where there is no proclaimed right and wrong, no illusions of safety, no answers. It is where freedom dwells, morality has no power, where outlaws ride unrestrained. I reject the simplistic binary accusations and roles, oppressor or victim, ally or -phobe, black or white, us or them,

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I begin to think about how so many peoples have described their pre-colonized languages as having very few words which tend toward the binary. Translation into more binary-focused languages can be difficult due to the multi-dimensional, situational, and experiential nature of many native tongues. Some of which more easily described relationships more as shades of color than rigidly binary, flooded with deeper meaning that only makes sense within a living culture, tending towards the poetic, rather than the analytical, transversing many levels and dimensions simultaneously in apparent simplicity. But rather than view these languages as densely packed, they might be more accurately described as multidirectional ripples of consciousness. I once heard this as the ability to say a dozen things at once on different planes of consciousness. And I think of other ways of experiencing and comprehending, where dreams and the waking life are not distinct, or at least not opposed. Understanding and communication extend through language, lifeforms, landscapes, and time, because they are not distinctly separated by these limited concepts. This is beyond what simple language can explain, with the binary as the shallowest method. Add to this the

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subjective reality of the infinitely unique experiences and spirits of the individual within the immensity of the infinite cosmos, and, well, it seems pretty open and incredible again, especially if tied back into a living ecosystem. Ah, and the world is temporarily repossessed back from The Deadening Ones in the joyous moments of our lives.

In the end, our choices are just that, our own. They are how we play out our relationships between ourselves and into the world. If we are honest with ourselves, our authenticity expresses itself in each situation in a multitude, and at times in seemingly contradictory, of ways. When we limit ourselves to binary dictates of either/or, then we are slaves to the will of our enemies, to their game, to their control, to their domestication process. When we take on their either/or scenarios, wear them as uniforms, or worse yet, internalize them as our own, we become part of them. To live on our own terms will never make us popular or win friends, but it seems to be the only way towards authentic freedom, and the only way to form the few vital, prioritized, and kindred relationships of our lives. The only way to live. As difficult as it may be at times, I choose to embrace the living world of nuance, complexity, contradiction, uncertainty, and chaos. I reject their diametrical deadness. I choose to dream. I choose life. Sorry, I know that may seem sorta diametric, I suppose. I'll fly away now.

Neither here nor there...

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Neither here nor there...

Trigger Warning!

Here's a trigger warning
In the form of mere words
To let you clearly know
I think your world is just absurd
Your false ideas of safety
With more rules and codes
And me with my shotgun
Sendin' you on down the road
If you were just one person
Expressing your true emotions
And I were someone close
With real love and devotion
I'd care about your feelings
And try to ease your mind
But you're a faceless mass
So you can kiss my raw behind
We have all been damaged
In so many brutal ways
By a system made to break us
During all our precious living days

124

Trigger Warning!

Here's a trigger warning
In the form of mere words
To let you clearly know
I think your world is just absurd
Your false ideas of safety
With more rules and codes
And me with my shotgun
Sendin' you on down the road

If you were just one person
Expressing your true emotions
And I were someone close
With real love and devotion
I'd care about your feelings
And try to ease your mind
But you're a faceless mass
So you can kiss my raw behind

We have all been damaged
In so many brutal ways
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And while our trauma may be shared
Our scars are all unique
But I choose to be empowered
Not wear a badge of the weak

You can stay in your safe space
In an artificial bubble from life
Wrapped up in today's correctness
On your perpetually connected device
And I will stumble free in this world
Get banged up and badly bruised
But when I reflect back at the end
I will win, and you will lose

So don't tell me what to say
Or how I should inflect
Because I don't play your games
Your world I absolutely reject
My heart yearns for freedom
And my body for release
But your petty mind gets in the way
And I don't live on my knees

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p.s. I don't care what you think,
 no need to respond.

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nothin' left to say

i stare down at this paper
broken pencil in my hand
look out across this valley
tortured and twisted land

i gather final thoughts
a eulogy to another day
but my heart is so weary
there's nothin', nothin' left to say

nothin' left to say these days
nothin' left at all
as it all crumbles down
i just sit and watch it fall

yipee-i-o
yipee-i-a
yipee-i-you who who
nothin, nothin' left to say

i tried so many goddamn times
with shouts and tears and pleas
to wake the dead back into life
empty cries lost in the breeze

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Nazel Pickens

retreat to the woods
 to scrape just a little more time
 share my life with the livin'
 for our own reasons and rhymes

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Their World Is Virtually Done

To my mind, there is no characteristic of this current dismal point in human history that is more horrific and defining—yet more ignored and acquiesced to—than the almost encompassing grasp technology has over humans. In particular, I view social media, devices, apps, platforms, processes, robotics, AI, etc.¹ as all parts of the most invasive, overwhelming, and effective means of social control that humans have ever experienced, and there is virtually no critical or active resistance to it. Most anarchists are caught up in posturing and political games, participating on the self-righteous and militant edges of reformist social spectacles in the streets or trying to reduce humanity's self-inflicted harm through radical social work, charity, and civic responsibility. These slightly more aggressive social justice warriors often overlook, and even go as far as to appreciate and promote, the most diabolical chains ever experienced: technological omni-cyber-servitude. Just about every aspect of modern human life is radically, and subtly, filtered through generally compulsory technological mediums and procedures seemingly without much thought or care. "That's just the way it is." "This is what they give me to work with." "These are the times we live in." This situation, and attitudes toward it, define our time, while most anarchists prefer to fight with crude weapons

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This is not the life I wish to live. I'm looking for authentic and intentional relationships, not virtual friends. I want slow and multi-layered cooking prepared from ingredients found growing in my garden or forest home, not nutrition-less and tasteless fast food or DoorDashed meals. I want complicated and nuanced conversations, not narcissistic displays. I want to live and breathe, not log in (not that most people ever even log out anymore). I want to share and play music with friends under the stars, not be a zombie to Spotify's soulless and agenda-driven

In this increasingly abbreviated reality, most people appear to rely on, accept, and even embrace the technolandsaped subdivision more and more each day, from continual texting, to emojis, to alienated relationships and groupings based on presented identity, to simplistic thinking, to instant gratification, through social media and devices permanently connected to fingers, eyes, and minds. As someone who lives off the grid, without a cellphone or an internet connection,² I've watched from a distance, frustrated as the world around me fades into this half-lived life, and pretty damn quickly too. It has messed people up in some very significant ways.

I will not submit. I am still alive. I guess post-modernity, power, and the cyber-lobotomized alienated masses demand this, or at least help set the stage for it.

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algorithms. I want to create subtle and explosive expressions, not to forward links to politicized memes. I want to co-create my world with those I love, not comment on and drown in the sewage of popular, or so-called radical culture. I want ever-deepening connections that are face-to-face in real time, not alienated text groups or online chats. I want to feel deeply, not process marginally useful or barely interesting information that is at most tangential to my life and the lives of those I care about. I woke up on my side of the bed with the glorious sunrise, not the pre-set alarm of cold digital tones and the ever servile AI-version of the master's voice: "It is time to arise and prepare for your scheduled events."

Probably the most telling of technology's effects is how it forces us to experience time. Throughout civilization, every new development—from fire, to plows, to boats, to guns, to trains, to cars, to nuclear bombs, to, of course, the internet and cyber reality (and all the horrifying events in between)—alters the perception of time and all the attending relationships. It is always a one-directional acceleration. Even when there are temporary pauses, or even apparent regressions, civilization is always in forward momentum, an accelerating arc towards the singularity of humanity and technology. This has profound effects on our lives, physically, emotionally, psychologically. Yet, mostly these effects go unnoticed, like that metaphorical frog slowly being boiled. The latest accel-

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eration has not, however, slipped under the radar or been too gradual to perceive. People have been warning about it for well over a century, and it has been glorified by this culture for at least half that time. It has been approaching like a freight train in slightly-slowed cinematography. Most humans seem to have welcomed their technological submission, either actively defending it or passively acquiescing to its compulsory dictates. Most, but not all of us.

Some might reply that there are more interesting, useful, and liberatory ideas that come to us faster and spread further through new technologies. This is wishful and/or defensive thinking, since depth and critical understanding is always lost to hyper-speedy over-flooded modes and methods, leading to thinking that is superficial and fleeting, ever-changing, trendy, and conspiracy-prone, filled with flattened images, empty symbols, abbreviations, over-generalized concepts, and barely-concealed outside agendas. There will always be traps to lure in those who straggle on the edges of the logic of control.³ Traps that are promoted as positive exceptions to the more obvious negatives. But these grab only the most naive and those who want to fool themselves or those too fearful of not belonging to something larger. On a practical level, by relying on the system's venues and networks for communication, understanding, expression, and connection, people give up their autonomy and security. Signal, for instance, a supposedly secure texting interface between certain

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groupings, has become among some, a primary mode of communication, planning, and connecting, fairly compulsory in most radical and anarchist circles. Not even getting into the more complicated and troubling issues of exclusivity (a concept I embrace in certain terrains and despise in others), nor the icky project of social networking, nor the very questionable assumptions of “security”, the acceptance of these types of social interactions seems out of step with a deep understanding of the technological nightmare, or any attempt to escape, undermine, and destroy its control. It also seems absurd that any network not created by those using it can be safe or secure on any meaningful level. More importantly, this method of communication is altering those who communicate with it. Knowingly or not, people sculpt their thoughts, ideas, and even actions to fit a medium, and thus their process and how it is perceived is inherently altered by that alienated form. The medium dictates. Why would this be a desired mode at all, let alone between those wanting authentic relationships?

Recently, for instance, during local wildfires a so-called mutual aid group (mutuality implies real connection, not charity, public relations, or community service, but that’s a conversation for another day) communicated, planned, and promoted sharing events and gatherings almost entirely through Signal. This meant not only that some were left out due to technological reasons, but also speaks to people’s reliance on these tools that are not ours. I can

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only wonder what these activists will rely on when the grid goes down, due to the fires, government agencies, hackers, or even (here's some wishful thinking), us? While most of us have to use these mediated forms, one can only hope it is done reflectively, temporarily, and strategically, and for only the less personal events in our lives, like forced and tactical interactions with capitalism and authority. When it comes to networks of mutual aid, something I feel is an often over-convoluted concept already, why would moving further away from direct experience be valued? Unless of course your goal is working from within to better society, which is a political goal, not an anarchist one. Also, as the system breaks down further—which it seems to be constantly doing, and which I thought we wanted—why are people relying more and more on its infrastructure for almost every aspect of their lives? Wouldn't we want to create methods that function without and outside this crumbling infrastructure, on the scale of our lives, in modes we relate to, on our terms? To the best I can, I live the life I want now, with the means that are as consistent as possible with that life, informed by it, alive in it, not to organize online to fight for something that might look vaguely like it. I want to live free, not work for a pale image of freedom.

In my critique of social media and the generalized technological landscape, I have been especially critical of younger people's almost complete dependence on it. In this, I am less accusatory and more sorrowful over their

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situation. I understand that they were born into this particularly shallow context, raised with a screen in front of them almost from the moment of birth. Most of their social interactions, from friends to dating to entertainment to commerce to work, are heavily filtered through these mediations. I do hold them accountable in the realm of personal responsibility and agency, but as a so-called Generation X'er, I did not come of age with such overwhelming pressure to conform in this particular way—television, pop music, and video games were relatively easy for me to escape, especially with youth, cynicism, and drugs at my disposal. But capitalistic post-modernity has metastasized, and there is no doubt in my mind that this type of socialization produces an overwhelmingly troubling generalized reality. This leaves me with some overarching critiques of not only the so-called Millennial and Z generations, but everyone who idealizes this virtual new world and the supposed possibilities it opens up.

Related to this, I have been misunderstood at times in my general critique of so-called youth culture, usually by those who seem to find value in the novelty of the new, the popular, and often, the urban. Mistaken as just a grumpy old-timer, I am the co-parent of, and coconspirator with, two extremely thoughtful, off the grid, home/self-schooled, amazingly creative teen-aged free-spirited women who have a more thorough critique of this world than most adults I know. I never discount youth, just pop-

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ularized cultural norms, especially when they penetrate the anarchist realm. I do believe that various radical youth subcultures have, at many pivotal moments throughout history, flung the world, or at least certain social relations, into extreme change, some at least partially for the better, some not. There is a freshness of youth, a desire to strive for a world beyond the trappings of their parents, and usually a bolder outlook in general. If this occurs in a somewhat functional face-to-face situation, it could provide a needed balance to the often too rigid practicality of the middle-aged and the experiential wisdom of the long-visioned elders, but within a hyper-capitalized, superficial, trend-heavy, narcissistic, alienated techno-culture, the desire for constant novelty and newness makes me suspicious. Sure, there are exceptions with unique insight, but these become more rare in a world where less depth of understanding is applied to so much more. In other words, these days people tend to know a lot less about a lot more. Just use a search engine for that if you don't believe me. The trajectory here seems obvious to anyone not seduced by the gaze of screens, the need to belong, or false attachment to concepts like hope. Add to this the never-ending insecurities and politics of victimization and identity, or really any politics at all, and I don't think anti-civilization anarchists and those truly seeking freedom have much to glean from these cesspools. Like always, most people are too far gone into the oblivion of domestication to come

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out of its spell, regardless of their demographic.

Of course, the extremely addictive nature of technology's hold is not to be underestimated. I choose to not focus my critique on scientific explanations here, which very well may be extremely relevant, but just not an interest of mine. Nor is science the point my arguments against technology move from. Others can make those arguments. I refer to two things when I talk about technology's addictive nature. First is the addiction to the process of using technology: the fascination with it, its short-sighted shortcuts, its proclaimed advances, its shallow novelty, the exalted inevitable direction it leads us in, the lie that it is essential to our lives (it may be for humans in mass society, but not for the vast possibilities of human experience). The visual and audio stimuli with the buzzers, whistles, and shiny sparkling glitter it dazzles with, that perhaps remind us in distorted ways of the beautifully rich, dramatic, and colorful world we once ran wild in. The other addictive quality is in the social realm: the connection it advertises, the friends it claims we have in these lonely times, the artificial sense of belonging to a larger community, the identity we can present for the world to see and negotiate with.

These addictions are very real, which is why for most of my life I have attempted to interact with that realm in very short, controlled, and mission-oriented spurts, which hasn't been that difficult for me since I find it ugly and insulting. While there are rare times when I get temporarily sucked

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into its illusion of embrace and usefulness, I am usually moving further from its grasp, deeper into the mountains and into my life. At the same time, I try not judge those in the midst of addiction. The horrors, disappointments, and emptiness of these times are great, and who am I to say how others should deal with them. But, I suppose, I do expect more from those who profess to understand deeply and critically this death culture, who profess to want a different life. But again, we all have our own forms of escape, and we cannot always see the joyousness that might be all around and inside of us. It is just that the escape that people find in the techno-social nightmare is so intertwined with our lives, runs so deep, and has such penetrating consequences to us and our world, that I have a hard time being near these functioning addicts, and an even more difficult time around the dysfunctional ones who try to steal bits of my life from me, looking for their next fix by trying to suck me in to their wounded excuses. Misery loves company. This is where I need social distance the most, lest my disappointment and anger overwhelm. Mostly, I am profoundly saddened to watch close friends of mine sink deeper into the dark hole of technology's grasp. I miss their unmediated, undistracted, and unpredictable presence. I can not relate to their new priorities, and feel the loss deeply. I hate the bluish glow on their faces and their annoying and unconvincing attempt at hanging out both in real time and virtually, multi-tasking their half-lived lives.

into its illusion of embrace and usefulness, I am usually moving further from its grasp, deeper into the mountains and into my life. At the same time, I try not judge those in the midst of addiction. The horrors, disappointments, and emptiness of these times are great, and who am I to say how others should deal with them. But, I suppose, I do expect more from those who profess to understand deeply and critically this death culture, who profess to want a different life. But again, we all have our own forms of escape, and we cannot always see the joyousness that might be all around and inside of us. It is just that the escape that people find in the techno-social nightmare is so intertwined with our lives, runs so deep, and has such penetrating consequences to us and our world, that I have a hard time being near these functioning addicts, and an even more difficult time around the dysfunctional ones who try to steal bits of my life from me, looking for their next fix by trying to suck me in to their wounded excuses. Misery loves company. This is where I need social distance the most, lest my disappointment and anger overwhelm. Mostly, I am profoundly saddened to watch close friends of mine sink deeper into the dark hole of technology's grasp. I miss their unmediated, undistracted, and unpredictable presence. I can not relate to their new priorities, and feel the loss deeply. I hate the bluish glow on their faces and their annoying and unconvincing attempt at hanging out both in real time and virtually, multi-tasking their half-lived lives.

So, what to do? Whatever you want, I suppose. Just don't think that you're building the world you say you want by sitting behind your screens and don't come runnin' to me for directions when yer device/interface no longer works and this shit goes down. I've been thoughtfully sculpting a different life with a select few for decades now. Again, individual agency has been greatly downplayed, to say the least, by those wishing for us to be fellow addicts in their misery or by those who have something to gain from our slavery. Sure, we were born into all of this and are not responsible for the situation, but we weren't born yesterday either; we have seen this developing within a historical trajectory and we have a choice about what we contribute to, adhere to, and lend support to. Choices we make, paths we walk, stands we take are all part of where we are within a context. These are not new questions or understandings for those who have been opposed to civilization, yet some seem to have forgotten. I can only hope there are remaining pockets of the disconnected (or disconnecting) people who are still alive out there in the margins, off the edges, or in the wild that I don't know about, those who live offline and in their own places and times. And I'm left thinking of possibilities, and how differently, how much more open and vast time has been conceived and articulated by so many different indigenous and earth-based cultures (whether they still live this way or are attempting to reconnect physically, emotionally, or culturally) compared to the

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Goodbye.

diminished, economic, and accelerating relation to time by the civilized. How each instant, each particular moment, could relate to everything else deeply, transferring to the point where there is little distinguishable difference, yet endless worlds unfold to the unique. I ponder those concepts of outliving and starving out the domesticator, of being outside ever-accelerating domesticated time. I think of not tolerating their reality for another sunset, and of the long visions of evasion for thousands upon thousands of moons. I think of the endless dimensions of freedom, and how none of them exist online or in any other alienated space, and never will. I think of an unmediated reality of a life fully lived, or at least the fullest we can each possibly dream, and the desire for some of these dreams to overlap in beautiful ways. What I do know is that their world is virtually done and I am done with it.

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(1) I am happily self-isolated and out of the loop here, so I'm sure there are more ridiculous and insidious things out there than I will ever know or care about. The dynamics, experiences, and systems are more relevant than the most up-to-date versions of the details, which can be easily drawn out from the situations, dynamics, and modes.

(2) I go to the local library for about an hour once a week to promote certain situations, maybe check their weather forecast, and very occasionally spit out some directed venomous fumes. I'd be a mean fuckin' troll and possibly a devastating edge-lord if I only had the time, allowed myself to be corroded by the internet's poisons, or really cared.

(3) As opposed to those quickly snatched up due to bad luck, situation, or stupidity, I refer to others who are a little better off in these regards and hover nervously nearby due to their addiction and dependence on the system.

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The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Worst part is they're some of my friends
They love to sing how the Right is wrong
But fail to hear their own sick song

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Trans-humanism just around the bend
Promises of more, but pitifully less
Dispirited dislocating arc of Progress

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Wanting us all to forever plug in
Technophile avatar warrior games
Meta-verse engulfs as real life wanes

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Oblivious that they're present-day puritans
Precious screens aid witch-hunting schemes
Canceling humor and freedom's wild dreams

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Labeling "Hetero-Normative Cis White Men"
Deciding for all what's true and false
Superficial judgement up against their walls

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The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
No one spared from their imposed plan
Their goal is one big homogenous mass
Uniqueness relegated to thin temporary masks

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Not a question of if, only when
Their putrid bile of arrogant morals
Make bowels of authentic freedom boil

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Micro-managing of mother hen
Macro-managing of father cock
Keep'm safe, so they're taught

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Thinking they're free in the lion's den
Cries of Justice, Equity, and Oppression
And all identities currently in fashion

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
Creating dynamics where victims reign
Activists perpetually struggle for power
Only satisfied when others cower

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The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
 Heading for the cliff like good ovine
 Artificial togetherness is their way
 Only diversity on picture day

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
 Cold steel eyes and perma-grin
 Can't ever take a fuckin' joke
 Removing all self-creation and wonder

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
 Pushing agendas with guilt and shame
 Forcing individuals to knuckle under
 Removing all self-creation and wonder

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
 No break from politics' goal to bend
 With pronouns and jabs and harm reduced
 Tomorrow's cops are on the loose

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The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
 Gotta be the sickest I've ever been
 Culture engineered from safe PoMO nooks
 Millennial marxists who never opened books

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What to say, what to wear, what to do
When they are enemies of me and you

The Leftovers Made Me Sick Again
And some of my friends think it ain't them
They whine and cry about symptomatic sins
And just can't grasp why it's all so grim

Invecchiare Selvatico

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Invecchiare Selvatico

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We're black blossoms at the end of the world
 A lil' rotten,
 But ain't never been spoiled
 While yer busy pluggin' in
 Like a frog bein' boiled
 We're black blossoms
 At the end of the world

Back then I tried to warn y'all
 This way a-livin's
 Headed for a fall
 Ya didn't listen then
 An' you sure don't care now
 Stare at yer screen
 I'm leave the crowd

We're black from our leaves down to our roots
 And we're gonna break
 The rope of yer noose
 Try to hold us down
 You'll be underground
 Never again
 Makin' a sound

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I ain't tryin' to fix this big ol' mess
'Cause the more ya do
Ya get back even less
I'll be up there on the hill
With my shotgun and my folks
You can waste yer time
With the nazis and the wokes

Some say a civil war is on the brink
And we gotta choose a side
Or this thing'll surely sink
I'd rather walk the plank
Take my chances in the waves
Then stay onboard
Chained up with all you slaves

Well, that's what I got to say to y'all
I'm outta here
'For my backs up against the wall
You can throw all them names
You wanna stick on me
But I'll be runnin' wild
While yer dyin' on yer knees

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Nazel Pickens

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