

# Life in the Cracks

A Novatorean Essay on Creating Meaning From Nothing on a Hopelessly Dying Planet

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Can we be honest?

The present politico-economic matrix offers no possibility of a halt, reversal, or even significant “damage control” of anthropogenic climate change. The market and legal system’s interests are diametrically opposed to 350 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere, to wild nature, to a livable ecosphere, and to the freedom of all animals, human and non-human. Those interests are enforced and maintained by a military-and-prison complex of a previously unthinkable size, strength, and capacity. Further, no possibilities of “revolution” heretofore envisioned are even remotely likely to occur in a manner that would alter the course of the present ecological crisis. While some “revolutionary anomaly” could occur, it is unlikely enough to be unwise if not outright insane to put any serious hope into.

All this is to leave out discussion on similarly damning ecological catastrophes; exponentially-increasing species extinction, increasing net deforestation, precarious and finite energy sources, increasing population and strain on limited resources, widening oceanic dead-zones and fishery collapse, previously unthinkable topsoil depletion rates, and droughts of duration and severity happening with ever greater frequency, to name a few.

I am not asking if we can be honest rhetorically. I am asking genuinely and practically. If you accepted these notions as true or “basically true”, could you continue? Would you slip into apathy, or heroin, or suicide? Would you “go out with dignity” in a woodland commune? Would you travel the world taking photos and writing articles to store in a digital time capsule for some future society to find? Would you set fire to a refinery, or a power plant, or a biotechnology complex and accept prison time? Would you immerse yourself ever deeper in futile legislative efforts and air-conditioned shopping malls? Would you simply have a good meal and enjoy the day?

*Enjoy the day?*

I am writing this because I don’t know what I will do. This essay is my attempt at creating some meaning in the face of this Absurd predicament, in hopes of finding others who share a similar understanding. In a culture of make-believe, to be honest is to enter a desert of solitude. If I must enter the desert, my chances of survival are much higher with a band of nomads; I will die if I enter alone. This essay, then, might be read as a sort of nihilistic personal ad.

The views I've expressed above are put to words beautifully and clearly in the 2011 text *Desert*, found on the anarchist library website and submitted by an anonymous author. The text essentially lays out the factual basis of our predicament and draws up criticisms of radical environmental movements, their analysis, and their assumptions to form a way of thinking some have aptly called "Green Nihilism". Here I will continue to build on these assumptions. For a better understanding of my impetus for writing this essay, I recommend reading *Desert* first.

Can we inhabit the cracks in the specter?

To quote *Desert*, "there is no global future." Dominated spaces and free spaces will always exist. We can never liberate all of society, which may seem pessimistic, *but they can never fully control all of society either*. In some places at some times, people and living beings can gather in spaces that the dominant culture and its functionaries cannot see or touch. In these spaces, we are free to play by whatever rules we like. In other places, the Eye's capacity to see and inflict its own agenda is so total as to be inescapable. Spaces that fall into this latter category may have to be left for dead, for now.

The logic of systems of domination is inherently spectacular, that is, these systems are merely widespread *beliefs*, often backed by guns, punishments, and prisons. But where there are no enforcers of these beliefs, do they exist nonetheless? Can one step outside them functionally? Can the spectacle break down in some time-spaces? As I understand it, the answer is *yes*, and it is this *yes* that can offer some sense of meaning in the face of the larger predicament. It may even offer the foundations of a limited sort of optimism for those flexible, innovative, and resilient enough to make use of these breakdowns.

To quote Renzo Novatore, Italian individualist anarchist, in a translation of a number of his essays from the early 20th century titled *Toward the Creative Nothing*,

*"Anarchism is the eternal struggle of a small minority of aristocratic outsiders against all societies which follow one another on the stage of history."*

Novatore's description of anarchism as *aristocratic* is the sort of iconoclastic hyperbole that characterizes much of Novatore's work. He likely phrased it that way to piss off anarcho-communists, who fiercely debated him, usually for his unhinged willingness to expose the sleepy character of their static, organizationalist dogmas. And there can be no doubts that it worked, even in his wake – these words incite rage among the stricter ranks of social anarchists even today. Yet in much the same way that Jesus's position as "king of kings" served to destabilize the social category of "king" in a fundamentally anti-authoritarian manner, Novatore's "aristocracy" does the same. These empowered individuals who seize upon their own freedom comprise a minority, to be sure, but unlike bourgeois aristocracy, *this minority inevitably seeks to enlarge itself* by whatever means are expedient. This conception of anarchy thrives in those reaches of the earth that the Panopticon cannot see. Those dark alleys and dirt roads are the initiation grounds of this aristocracy.

This breakdown in the state's capacity to see and inflict its interests is not strictly physical. It is also philosophical. The hegemony of the state and of systems of domination is wrought with untruths and false assumptions, which each of us inherit and should question in the interest of honesty. The atheists have pioneered this process quite well. Their request to the theists is simple: Make as many claims as you wish, however wild, and I will believe them when you produce the proof.

There is a classic analogy frequently used by atheists to demonstrate the point that the burden of proof, for any claim, lies on the claimant; if an individual claims there is a tiny teapot in orbit

of Venus, too small for any telescope to see, am I to believe their claim outright, without proof? Of course not. Nor am I to believe the agnostic position, that there is as equal a possibility of the teapot's existence as there is of its non-existence. It is a ridiculous claim that I assume to be basically false until some evidence or suggestive proof is produced. And belief in God is no different.

Yet the atheists have usually not taken this way of thinking quite far enough. Claims to inherent or objective meaning *of any kind* lay upon similarly baseless metaphysical claims. All that is meaningful is such because we, the subject, have made it so. The question is whether our subjective process of meaning-making is, in fact, our own. Claims to objective meaning serve to mediate individuals and the meaning they create, generally for the benefit of some parasitic, external social order, class, or ideology. These claims render the subject into a servant and prisoner of that mediator. Yet this servitude ends when the subject asks the simple question to those who claim there is objective meaning – moral, existential, political – “where is the proof?”

They can produce nothing but irritated glances or empty, self-aggrandizing bloviation in response to this question. They may come full circle and make arguments for God in secular clothing (the ‘common good’ and ‘the revolution’ being perhaps the most common). The nihilist anarchist sees this as a desperate, pitiful attempt of the powerful to keep their clothes on and their thrones intact.

And so we have murdered dialectics – fine! It is here, on a nihilistic backdrop, with a rejection of claims to meaning's inherence, that I am free to create my own meaning from nothing. As Novatore put it, I walk Toward the Creative Nothing. The process of the anarchist aristocracy's self-enlargement is in my mind the highest form of love, and is, for me, the greatest source of meaning. From the rogue's position in society's darkest corners, her beckoning hand says ‘come, self-actualize to the highest extent alongside me, let us expropriate our lives from this wretched system and sweep upon it on its foggy nights, that we may bring others into the fold!’

My death looms! It may strike any day or leave me decades more in this dying place – what would it do for me to wait to reach my highest form? Wait for what? My only certainty is in my own experience in the present! And is the same untrue for others who surround me? Should we not take the plunge together? Certainly, shackles to this self-actualization exist that are common between me and those around me; Work, rent, hunger, boredom, ignorance, inherited morals and ideals, the police, the stifled moral insistence of ideologues (‘radical’ and reformist alike), and at times, the suffering of others still.. There are many shackles to be broken and, to reclaim the old adage of the prophets of the ‘work ethic,’ many hands make for light work.

Bruno Filippi, contemporary of Renzo Novatore, in 1916:

*“This evening, as usual, I was reading when a passage of the piece struck me vividly and I then stopped reading to reflect. I was just then musing when, turning my eyes absent-mindedly about the room I looked, and more, I saw myself seated on the bed. Not I, but yet it was I, because he was absolutely like me. Amazed, I gazed in silence, and he, the other I, looked at me as well, but with a certain ironic smile.*

*“Who are you?” I asked him. ‘Your shadow,’ he answered. ‘I have come here for a bit of discussion.’ ‘Let’s discuss, then,’ I replied.*

*‘Well: why are you an anarchist?’ ‘Why, because currently we are exploited, trampled by rulers.’*

*“Rhetoric, rhetoric, my dear! Listen: you are an anarchist and you don’t even know why. I have always noticed this: that in every society there have been innovators who end up on the stake, on the cross and so on and so on. So these innovators with all their dreams and sacrifices failed miserably, because any renewal, anticipated by any individual whatsoever, occurs a long time after the death of that individual. And this is what will happen with you anarchists. You will die without seeing any one of your ideals carried out, and the generation after you, which may live in an anarchist society, will long for a higher ideal and will die in their turn without achieving anything. It’s a vicious circle, an eternal chasing after oneself.”*

But enough! My interest is not to convince you of anything. Hell, throw it away and write your own paper – I am writing this for myself and those for whom it resonates with. Beyond that, you’re on your own. My interest in discoursing to “reasonably expose Truth” has atrophied. The endless, circular repartee of the intellectuals makes me nauseous. Could I devote my whole life to discourse, as the world burns, so that I may rest in my ideological writhing for a few moments of Life in Truth before the deathbed takes me? “Debate now, friends, for the kingdom of action, of life’s enjoyment, is at hand!” I refuse – the ivory crucifix is an opium den for the infirm lizards who negate life and desecrate freedom, and I will strike blows against them at every chance!

Suddenly, “saving the world” has given us a postmortem gift. A gift that implores us not to look so hard into the future and at the whole of society that we miss ourselves in the present. From the hypertrophied corpse of Optimism crawls an optimism that looks similar, but is a dwarf with a stubborn clarity in his eyes, and a boltcutter in his hands...

He leads us onward, into the desert! Into the cracks in the stubborn specter! To Life!

A rocket takes off, heading for space – presumably loaded down with the impotent and imbecilic children of the bourgeoisie to “save the human race”, species being their only common trait with us rabble – and carries with it many fuel tanks. As the tanks are exhausted, they are dropped. One by one, they fall, until the pilots are adrift in space, in total solitude.

So too with our ideals! We find answers to the problems we see, and acquaint ourselves with the social scene of those who share our answers. We join the party, we go vegan, we go to protests. But the honest innovators find in each scene many inconsistencies, many weak-spots in the walls – a fuel-tank drops and an ‘answer’ is superseded! We push the weak-spots and find hidden entrances to new social scenes, each one smaller and more certainly fanatical than the last, and we repeat the process again and again. Eventually, all ideologies have been followed through with and abandoned, and the pilot is free to live in complete purity and... complete isolation. Having regained touch with *nihil*, we are free to drift back to the surface of the earth, where the filth and stupidity that was once so unbearable becomes a delight, possessed of a fulfilling quality the loneliness of certitude stood bereft of. And it is here that new Sisyphian dreams are born!

I have been to *nihil*, I have dwelled there in immense pain and suffering, and I have been a professional dreamer of Sisyphian dreams. What are these dreams? In the face of our meaningless predicament, what meaning do I create from nothing? What is next?

The negation of objectifying structures is paramount. Work, money, commodities, preconceived notions, morality *in toto*, even – perhaps particularly – dictums to negate objectifying structures. The clock turns our lives into raw materials, the dollar makes the living dead dance,

the factories turn individual trees into tree-shaped keychains and the slaughterhouses turn beings with personalities and desires into meat to feed the sickening masses. All such structures must be destroyed in laughing fits of rage, all our hatred for life's vulgar yoking channeled where we see fit – at the roots.

We will destroy the economy. Legions of unpaid interns, whores, debt serfs, and dumpster-divers will step to the stage, swashbuckling and violent. The stomachs of the moderates and parasites will wretch and the thief's laughter will pervade everything as we swoop upon them. The seeds of their mores that lay buried inside us will be expectorated as we sicken our most bourgeois tendencies, nastily fucking in orgiastic defiance, gobbling their buffets with reckless abandon, forcefully disrobing all morality in the name of our crews, ourselves, of all that is wild and fulfilling of our desires! Dead is the Secular Christian image of revolution, and the violence of supersession has ushered desire back to the stage.

The fringes of society's phantom offer a plethora of means by which we can subsist and even live well. The dumpsters are often laden with more food than we can preserve. The highways are lined with the corpses of deer tragically murdered by cars and trucks – but we can make the best of it by preserving their flesh. Loading docks sit un-secured, ripe with possibilities for those willing to step up and take them. Free seats to every thinkable location abound on most freight trains and in the cars of most highway travelers. Abandoned houses waiting to be loved exist in every rural backwater and burnt-out, dead city. Welfare programs are still heartily poured onto the dispossessed in an effort to soothe our rage. Bank security guards lay asleep in a stoned haze. All of this to quell our hunger and to warm our chills as we lay in wait and draw up tomorrow's plans of escalation and ecstasy.

All this, too, in service of work refusal. Work is the vampire of Life, the objectifier of time, the crucifixion of Desire. The conservative elements of anarchism issue workerist polemics and fatwahas, themselves no different from the reactionaries who implore those on the margins to "get a job!" Yet it is the bottom-dwellers who have fed themselves with the Hustle for time immemorial. We are there, splitting wood and picking beans, weighing dimebags, scrapping metal, sucking dick! We are there, shoplifting DVDs, shaking change cups, boosting jewelry, throwing hay, flipping dirtbikes on craigslist, trading foodstamps for cash, powerwashing houses (burglarizing them later), selling fireworks, moonshine, assault rifles, loosies and mixtapes. Let our gangs and tribes perfect the art of the Hustle! We are filthy and wild, we are classy and sharp, we are agile and out on parole, and frankly, we are not interested in busting ass for the suits.

Free from the need for conventional work, the practice of 'expanding the aristocratic anarchist fold' is made more possible than ever. I seek to collectivize my hustles among free individuals I respect and struggle alongside against society and stagnation, to assemble a crew of eccentric and wild companions that bulges and splits and disagrees and destroys. From the woods, the mountains, the railyards, the ghettos, we can turn our gaze to those lodged deeper in prisons they cannot will themselves from and hatch plots to crumble walls made of concrete or illusions – and keep them well-fed in their transition to Life, to action, to desire, no matter their needs. In time, we may be able to achieve the economies of scale necessary to support families, nonhumans in recovery from domestication, differently-abled people, and all those who have less Spartan needs than some of us.

But this is not enough! Simply establishing outposts, spaces where the lucky can lay low is, by itself, a masturbatory endeavor. Instead, the creation of nomad-infrastructure and insurgent depots of expropriated goods must serve as the backbone of a much larger struggle. These are

the nests where we dream and make plans, the hovels in which we make love and fraternity. Is it enough to simply live out our lives here, in the cracks?

*As a young man he [Novatore] joined the Arcola group of anarcho-communists, but he was not satisfied with the harmony and limited freedom of the new society they awaited so eagerly. "I am with you in destroying the tyranny of existing society," he said, "but when you have done this and begun to build anew, then I will oppose and go beyond you."*

For all those content to dwell simply in their communes, it must be made clear that I will go beyond you, striking like a wild vulture at the decaying innards of the system – and at you, should you stand in my way. In our tipis and squatted homes, I will gain my strength. I will ferment my hatred of this society into a potent mash. How will I distill this mash but through action?

As certainly as there are cracks in the system fit for nomadic dwelling, there are cracks in the system that offer opportunities to strike. The abused child strikes his drunken stepfather in the testicles without remorse before darting off into the forest at night – we must fight like we've been trained! Do not be hung up on classical and heroic notions of what struggle must look like. We must fight dirty – as our oppressors do.

Everywhere there are prisoners, there are resistors on the edges of escape and insurrection, and it is these individuals we must aid. I see the destroyed faces of children in the schools and my gut turns with disgust for their captivity – what can I do for you? The slaughterhouses drop the bodies of gentle beasts for profit day and night, remorselessly driving them forward to the blade – how can I end your torment? My friends imprisoned by the state for the crime of Freedom – where are the weak points in the prison walls? The bosses, the rapists, the cops, the abusers, the dealers of hard-drugs, the polluters – what are their addresses?

Consider it: If I know a person to be planning a mass murder of innocent beings with a particular gun tomorrow night, and I know where he keeps his gun, what better way to prevent that murder than by destroying his gun? Convincing him might not work; killing him stifles his ability to change his mind. In the same vein, I must destroy the tools of the oppressors and those who aid them. Is it the electric mainline or the gas tank? Is it the locks and fences? Is it the stun-gun and patrol car?

Deeper still, is it the secrecy in which the elites function that allows them to continue their charades? Is it the efficiency of the monogamous nuclear family that supplies them with a glut of cheap, easy-to-govern workers and consumers? Is it the comfortable numbness of the middle class that offers the status quo the support of a silent majority? What must we disrupt? It is always different. While it takes one second and a few days' planning to cut power to a slaughterhouse, it takes a lifetime to cut down the power of traditional notions of what family and love is.

Yet is even this way of thinking too optimistic? I write this from relative isolation. I write of cracks in the system but inhabit cracks in the lives of those I love – confined to whatever time is not stolen from them by vampires of Life. I am unable to shake the feeling that despite the love of all my friends, I will be alone. And today, while I have had the strength to refuse, others do not. Others do not want to refuse. Dad's belt is not his; it is "ours", as much as we criticize it, they say. I refute this claim with my entire being. It has been said that requesting our attacker pull a knife nine inches deep in our back out to six inches is not enough – we must get the whole knife out *by any means necessary*. Is work any different? Are our subconscious drives toward power – the state's seed in our minds – any different? People I love compromise with the society I hate and wish to destroy. Must I leave them behind? Time slips by me as I wait. I have no reason to expect

them not to fall back on the comfort of their degrees, even to adopt middle-class sensibilities. Yet I hope nonetheless.

If I am lacking, I take what I need without remorse. Hunger is simple. I know dozens of ways to hustle a meal. But how do I hustle people into throwing off expectations, self-doubt, addictions to comfort? How do I hustle them into declaring open warfare on this society alongside me? How do I hustle the love of armed joy? This is a thing I cannot steal, trade, or purchase. The intellectual vagabond swears at the sun! I hate this place, I hate this society, I visit the creative nothing of *nihil* as a daily matter of course! And then, the highway, to new shores. But to leave my comrades? To leave these days and nights of love? I heave with hatred at the thought. I want it all, yet my possibility of having it all is slim. I wait.

Why do they do it? They think I am insane for having said no. Yet I was just like they are today. Writing papers, constricting myself to a schedule, heartily convinced of the usefulness of my bondage, kissing the rings of the expectation-dolers. *Impressive, Andy!* Excellent! Have another drink! Take another ridiculous course! Think of next year! Next decade! Next life! This vulgar charade insulted my soul. I scraped myself up; I took to the highway of my desires! And I walked free to do as I pleased. If it didn't work, I made it work. I forged, stole, worked, fucked, drifted, and hiked until I began to heal from a lifetime of inanity, becoming a permanent guest without accomplices, beginning my search for others!

On a foggy new moon, at the height of our struggle, the insurgent dwells in the system's cracks, carefully searching for weak points in the prison walls where incendiary devices can be installed.

Is the artist any different?

That which we cannot hustle, hack, or steal, we must carefully dismantle through a process of seduction. The artist searches for warm cracks in the psyche of the prisoner that she can enter. The prisoner allows her to come close, on the false assumption that she comes bearing a masturbatory reinforcement of the beloved objectives of the prison walls. Rhythm hypnotizes, color dashes the eyes, concepts misdirect Stockholm Syndrome toward Desire, and in time, the individual is asking questions and glaring at walls with a glint of disbelief. The prisoner notices the Cracks in the Walls, sees a note from another resistor that the prison door is, in fact, unlocked, and that despite the jeers of his fellow prisoners to the contrary, there is no guard waiting just around the corner.

What waits around the corner of the prison corridor is instead the fledgling aristocracy. It is those free individuals with whom the escapee will sprint with into battle. Yet in translating this metaphor to real life, each of us is tasked with situating this escape geographically and culturally. When we have exited our prisons, what do we see?

From the Associated Press:

*CHICAGO – After spending most of his adult life behind bars, 73-year-old Walter Unbehaun decided to rob another bank in hopes of getting caught. He felt more comfortable in prison, court documents allege, and wanted to spend his final years there.*

How can we expect to be any different? Patrice Jones, animal liberationist and intersectional feminist, writes in her essay, *Stomping with the Elephants*;

*“How do you break a wild animal? The key can be found in the word itself: You sever connections.*

*To break or domesticate an animal you must first physically isolate the individual from the natural world. Then, you must cut all natural bonds to other animals by controlling sexual relations, interrupting the relationship between mother and child, and rupturing the structure of the extended family. You must alienate the animal from herself, so that she no longer expects her own will to control her own body. Finally, you must break the spirit, by humiliating and violating the animal in every possible way, including physical and sexual assault.*

*It's no accident that these are the same tactics used by abusive husbands to control their wives, or that analogous methods are used to bring wild plants under "cultivation." After all, "husbandry" refers to the breeding of plants and "livestock," while "grooms" are both breakers of horses and takers of brides."*

Can we be honest? Each of us has been broken. We have no millennia-old traditions or knowledge. We inherit no social or natural bonds that are un-mediated by power or the object. We have no extended familial ties or communities that are worth a damn in juxtaposition to those of undomesticated humans. We have been alienated from our own individuality by systems of domination and control in schools, in sex, in workplaces, in family relationships, in a mass culture we have no hand in influencing or creating, in ecosystems we do not interact seriously with or live within. To think we can make a single exit from this breakage is as naïve as subscribing to Marxist-Dogmatist notions of 'communist revolution' occurring in a single swoop. Our revolution of self must be perpetual and situated oppositionally to the static.

Healing must occur; new bonds and ties with others must be formed. I do not seek an affinity group strictly as a means to the end of making a strike against this society. I seek this social arrangement as a survival tool, as a means of solidifying my own individuality outside the prison walls. I seek it as a means to heal and as a means in itself.

Yet this healing is not strictly regenerative. The breakage inflicted on us by systems of domination and domestication is not a clean cut. It is not a simple wound we can bandage up and heal once: It is instead a long-term process of scarification, so deep that it has re-written the regenerative process of our bodies, minds, and world. In order to heal to the point of not winding up where we began, we must target what these systems have written into our 'DNA' and destroy it. The tendency to return to our prisons is written deeply into us. We must destroy this in order to heal.

Healing such as this cannot be hustled, stolen, or hacked. The same process of seduction that was necessary to get us to question that which confines us to begin with must continue! The artistic element of the strike against society is exposed here. In this light, an attack becomes an end in itself, worth pursuing purely for its expressive, artistic qualities. "Efficacy" is irrelevant if our action serves as a reminder of our infinite power, if it stirs our self-belief and strengthens our affinity groups and crews. The dialectic is dead. It is nonetheless, to me, all the better if our action also happens to smash objectifying apparatuses that inflict suffering on individuals and build the prisons of domestication we struggle against.

To look back over one's shoulder in a hot sprint and see flames or sparks, to see masked rioters taking a street back, to see that you made it off with the money – such is the nourishment that kills the germ of sleep that pulls us magnetically back to our posts in confinement. The feeling of handing in your resignation, of hearing what month it is and realizing you don't remember the last time you did something you didn't enjoy, of punching your boss – this is the pièce de



résistance that feeds the aristocrat's soul. Longer-term endeavors – seeing a forest come back, cultivating rich soil and productive gardens, helping a friend stabilize their mental illness, crafting long-term love with friends and partners, fighting an addiction – only serve to solidify our insurgent position and offer us fulfillment. My examples here are no match for what lies in the imaginative power of each liberated individual.

Artists and iconoclasts though we are, we must not get so caught up in the nuts-and-bolts elements of action that we fail to remain 'at large'. Because, as it has been said, "Freedom is the crime that contains all crimes", it is inevitable that the individual who rejects compromise with power and the object will stand at odds with the state in one way or another. Avoiding being suspected only goes so far, and eventually despite our best efforts, it is likely we will be sought by the panopticon. What do we do in this case?

*"[...] the more nomadic a people the more independent they are likely to be. Governments know this, as can be witnessed by the widespread attempts to settle their desert nomad problems. Whether it is the obstinate survival of Aboriginal life ways in Australia, the uncompromising resistance of the Apache led by Victorio or the recent Tuareg insurrection in the Sahara, nomads are often adept at fight and/or flight [...] That the resistant independence of nomads is often mixed with a practical disbelief in borders makes them threatening to the very ideological basis of governments."*

- Desert

Radical struggles that adhere themselves to a fixed geographical location historically have been suppressed with relative ease. The Paris Commune, the Syndicalists in the Spanish Civil War, The Magonistas in Mexico, Mahknovist Free Ukraine, and so on. Some exceptions stand to disprove the "ease" aspect of this claim, but none stand to suggest land-based struggle to be an effective means of insurrection in anything but a limited sense (I contend that the Zapatistas' relative success in southern Mexico is a novelty unlikely to be exported elsewhere, especially the postindustrial west). From where I stand, it appears as though it is instead those who assemble themselves in a nomadic, diffuse manner who stand to resist state power and repression most effectively.

We must dispel all visions of the autonomous zone as it has been envisioned heretofore. The city commune is a sitting duck for the military and police. *El frente* in Catalonia is over with and any fetishes we may have for the warfare of yesterday's struggles need to be let go of. Instead it is necessary that we create a loose, informal infrastructure that renders our aristocracy into an impossibly black night. Like the Underground Railroad that brought so many enslaved Africans freedom in the 19th century US, we must create a network of safehouses, resource distribution, and clandestine communication extensive and informal enough to turn state repression into a midnight game of whack-a-mole. This idea is nothing new. A warning posted to the insurgents of Moscow on December 11th, 1905 states:

*Main rule: do not act en masse. Carry out actions in three or four at the most. There should be as many small groups as possible and each of them must learn to attack and disappear quickly. The police attempt to crush a crowd of thousands with one single group of a hundred cossacks.*

*It is easier to defeat a hundred men than one alone, especially if they strike suddenly and disappear mysteriously. The police and army will be powerless if Moscow is covered in these small unseizable detachments [...] Do not occupy strongholds. The troops will always be able to take them or simply destroy them with their artillery. Our fortresses will be internal courtyards or any place that it is easy to strike from and leave easily. If they were to take them they would never find anyone and would lose many men. It would be impossible for them to take them all because they, to do this, would have to fill every house with cossacks.*

The Lower East Side anarchist group Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (later Black Mask) famously defined the affinity group as “a street gang with an analysis.” This is precisely what our Novatorean aristocracy may consist of, albeit in a nomadic manner. It is here that we may borrow a note from the biker gangs, the crews of freight train hopping punks, and the bus-dwelling hippies that camp in deserts throughout the country. The “strike and bike” mentality will take us far as artists and insurrectionists – particularly if we become versed with multi-use, on-and-off-road motorcycles capable of ducking onto dirt roads and narrow paths in the night.

Infrastructure is needed, but on this point we must be careful. High-risk endeavors may demand infrastructure be created on an “as-needed” and occasionally, one-time-use basis.

Direct action of the classical, insurrectionist sort needn’t be the primary means of striking against the object, and our infrastructure and approach to nomadism can reflect this in terms of security. Some endeavors do not require the cover of total anonymity, nighttime, or distance from civilized settlement. For these elements of our struggle, which may at times comprise the majority, both aboveground and semi-aboveground infrastructure is necessary. These aspects serve primarily to collectivize our means of subsistence in order to evade employment and compromise with prison society.

Already I have mentioned possible sources of subsistence that lay outside the “sell life for work, work to pay for life” paradigm, ranging from expropriation to waste reclamation. To these I may also add small-scale subsistence gardening and foraging. Fields of invasive species exist, many fit to eat (though suburbanites and city-dwellers, the most vastly omnipresent of these invasives, are generally too rife with pallor and sickness to taste good) and preserve. While the practical considerations of permaculture, foraging, and small-scale gardening are far too many to cover in this essay, these practices are worth mentioning in any discussion of living well on the fringes of the economy, and certainly should be considered in the creation of nomad infrastructure. Permaculture in particular can be configured in a “plant it, leave it, return” fashion, already pioneered to some extent by the Tuareg and Berber peoples of northern Africa;

*Some nomad groups [in Saharan Africa] will occasionally cultivate cereals by making use of **maidars** - depressions in the surface of the desert that retain sufficient water for a meager harvest.”*

- *Food and Farming*, a 1991 textbook

Eventually, even the most devoted and sleep-hating artists and fighters must lay their heads to rest. If we are to evade rent, where will we do this? Sleeping on the medians of interstates, on the lawns of truck-stops, in hammocks in trees in city parks, on roofs of suburban shopping malls, these are classic solutions to this question. Yet one can engage with these solutions for only so

long before burning out. The police have a way of inflicting their jealousy onto sleeping tramps rather violently and generally much earlier in the morning than we'd care to awaken.

On the other end of the spectrum, buildings can be squatted with some success. (There is even a squatted castle in Barcelona I've heard of!) This means of obtaining decent shelter is not without problems as well, however, especially for those sought by the state. Evictions happen often and occasionally without warning, and occupants can face trespassing charges and arrest – which, for those who may have information about direct actions, may lead to much more dire charges. In many cases, the squat is a glorified campsite for transients that carries many of the same issues that conventional “tramp-and-camp” means of crashing have.

While both free-camping and squatting are useful in certain contexts, my bread-and-butter is neither. What I propose to be a reasonable “in-between” is the rental of rural land without amenities for the purpose of seasonally camping on. With some certainty I can say that an individual could rent an acre of land very cheaply, in cash, even pseudonymously if need be in many ‘back-woods’ areas by simply making offers to landowners. Land can also be, in some areas, squatted upon without issue (this could be made easier by constructing shelters of sod and materials cheap enough to leave without regret in the event of eviction). Also of note are the various government lands that can be camped on indefinitely, so long as one moves camp a mile or so every couple weeks, which is often loosely enforced.

Land parcels could be rented and squatted in numerous locations throughout the country, with special attention paid to the weather. The tendency to head south for the winter is likely. Portable shelter systems would be the likely choice – tipis, yurts, gypsy “bender tents”, canvas wall tents, travel trailers, pop-ups, vans, and busses. Each has advantages that suit particular climates better than others. Most of these can be engineered to be livable (even luxurious) in adverse conditions ranging from winter snows and cold to heavy winds and tropical rain. Do your research.

Initially, it would make sense to “leave no trace” on lands that are inhabited, until one knows in full the attitudes of locals and whomever you're renting from. As those relationships solidify, it could make sense to invest in long-term structures, gardens, and supplies caches. One idea I've had for a time would be a round or perhaps eight-sided structure (portable or not) with garage-door style doors on all sides. Each occupant who passes through the camp would open one of these doors and break camp there. This could be as elaborate as a camper trailer with a specially-tailored door that pulls right into the round structure or as simple as an insulated tarp to sleep beneath. The benefit is having a common area equipped with off-grid showers and kitchens, couches, and even perhaps a free library system. In winter scenarios, this would also make heating more efficient for everyone.

Whatever fees are associated with each of these structures could be collectivized among up to a dozen or so individuals. Given that these costs are probably low enough on the outset for a single person to handle, split ten or twelve ways, it would prove to be an exponentially cheaper means of living than paying rent in a conventional single-family unit. These spaces could also serve as hubs for buyers' co-ops for bulk dry foods and depots for expropriated food, money, and supplies. Gardens and permaculture projects could be started at this point. In addition, non-material types of mutual aid could be orchestrated, such as childcare and skillsharing.

The benefits of renting in this context are numerous. Because the transaction can likely be done in cash, and even (if necessary) under a pseudonym and with a cover story, it would be unlikely your presence would arouse suspicions. Local authorities may not even know, and the landowner you rent from may care very little about what you are doing (the nomad, being free to

move where they please, can be 'picky' about who they rent from, renting only from lackadaisical, uninterested types). In some cases they may hardly ever even see your camp. Next, the cost of renting raw, non-agricultural land is generally quite low. It is even thinkable to arrange a work-trade for use of this land in some cases. Lastly, because no legal ties exist between you and the land, you can easily exit the arrangement without a trace if need be.

From these outposts, we are free to attack. Let these invisible hovels in the deserts and forests bustle with hatred for the present social order and for whatever order of tomorrow is cooking in the pots of the liberals, fascists, and forlorn revolutionaries. Our flames will be lubricants of entropy and alleviators of ennui! We are here to speed up the process of decay that rots all thrones and rusts the monuments to the usurpers of life and cartels of illusion. We will sweep down on the new moon and break the walls of all prisons, emerging as an unstoppable flash of light! Again it is made clear, *"We want this tragic social dusk to give our "I" some calm and thrilling tinder of universal light!"*

Like vagrant insects, we will swarm and immerse those who hate our art in a venom so potent it dissolves all truth or ends them. As the Futurists – despite their faults – said: *"Some people are born old; slobbering specters of the past, cryptograms swollen with poison. To them no words or ideas, but a single injunction: **the end.**"* To the fascists and who foist beatings upon innocent immigrants, we have for you our pistols! To those who scratch at this planet with blades and violate it with noxious gasses, we have an injunction burgeoning from our heart-of-hearts to destroy your machines of death! To the progressive fools who hoodwink the young into fiendishly injecting compromise, we will expose you and disrupt your stagnant art and insipid discourse! Filippi's ghost swears from the grave again, *"What a joy to be present at the collapse of a world, to see blood, corpses, rot everywhere!"*

I am disgusted at the hiding and the pitiful displays of hope. I am made sick by the stubborn ghost of dialectics. Heartily I embrace the nothingness that surrounds me. Heartily I dive into a resonance of egos, the love that creates! My comrades, sleek rogues of absolute refusal, it is with you I ride into chemical-smog sunsets, away from the somber highway of yesterday! It is with you I will die, in freedom and in doom! Until then, to Life! *Life in the Cracks!*

*Any society that you build will have its limits. And outside the limits of any society the unruly and heroic tramps will wander, with their wild & virgin thoughts—they who cannot live without planning ever new and dreadful outbursts of rebellion!*

*I shall be among them!*

*And after me, as before me, there will be those saying to their fellows: "So turn to yourselves rather than to your Gods or to your idols. Find what hides in yourselves; bring it to light; show yourselves!"*

*Because every person; who, searching his own inwardness, extracts what was mysteriously hidden therein; is a shadow eclipsing any form of society which can exist under the sun! All societies tremble when the scornful aristocracy of the tramps, the inaccessible, the uniques, the rulers over the ideal, and the conquerors of the nothing resolutely advances.*

*So, come on iconoclasts, forward!*

*"Already the foreboding sky grows dark and silent!"*

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Life in the Cracks  
A Novatorean Essay on Creating Meaning From Nothing on a Hopelessly Dying Planet

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