

the ocean. Pretty seaglass. No leeching chemicals.

The Atmospheric

Oh but it gets worse. The plastic 'reclamation' flaunted by many countries as a solution, 'recycling', becomes yet another blight not only on people and animals, but on the planet. Waste is burned at a horrifying rate, with a 2019 report estimating 70 million tons of what was once plastic waste being burned, year on year. Plastic comes from oil. It begins life as pellets that are shaped and molded into the desired object for use. The burning of this is yet another STAGGERING source of atmospheric carbon, toxic gasses, pollution, soot, acid rain, you name it.

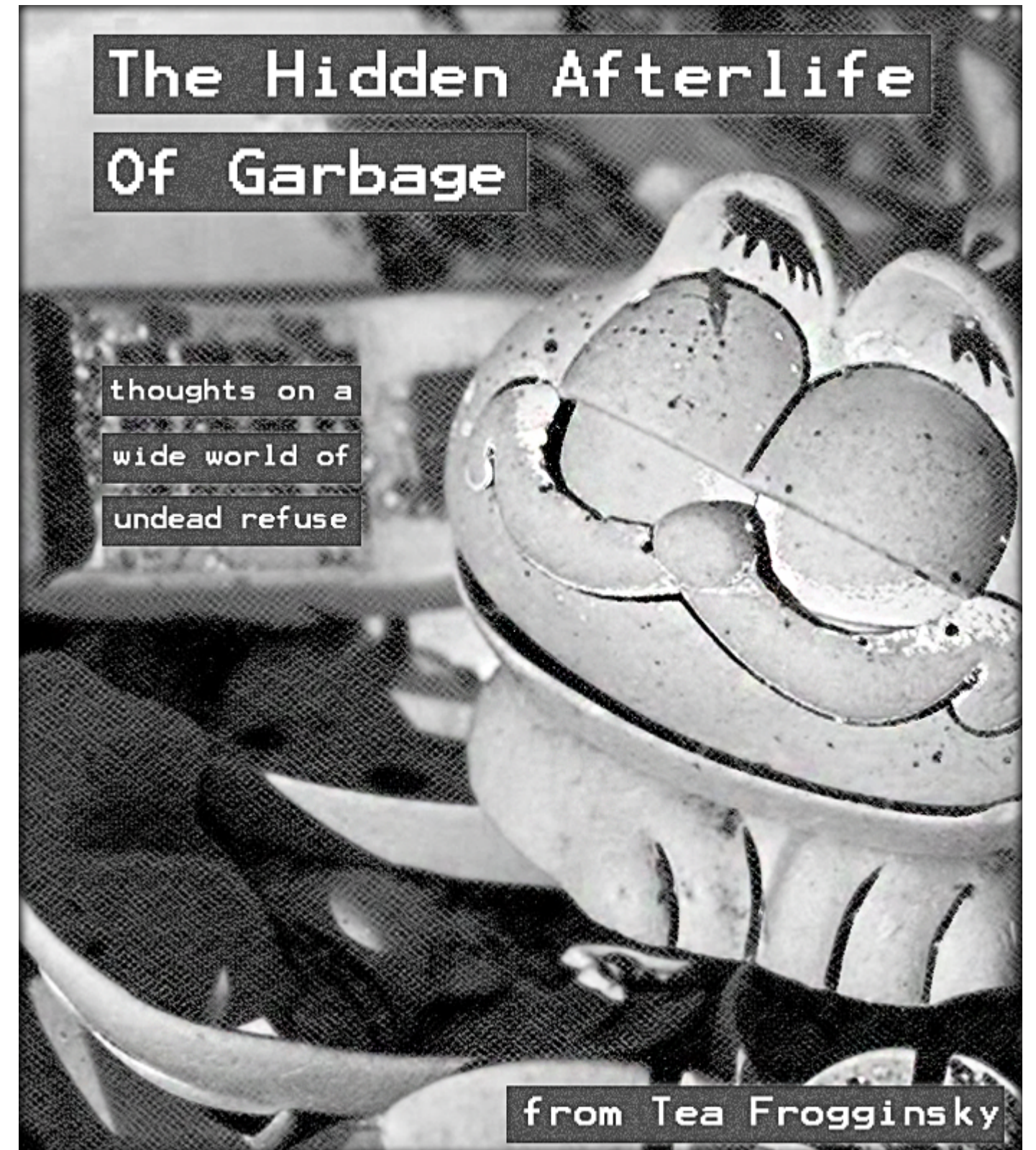
The lack of reuse value of plastic products necessitates this process, it is a constant turnover, neverending, as is the constant cycle of production and consumption, usually of food products that are also terrible for our health. The subject of air pollution has become alarming even for the most non-radical people. The WHO says the phenomenon accounts for about 7 million additional deaths per year. Multiple newspapers also report living near garbage dumps increases lung cancer risk.

The Conclusion?

Plastic, litter, garbage, trash, waste, debris, tare - whatever you might call it, is an undead force slowly sapping the life of all living species on this planet. Carelessness, mass production, and an unwillingness to change in any meaningful way are leading humans and animals alike into a world dominated by unnecessary, avoidable diseases. Lifestyles have become more decadent and safer in the west for sure, but this has only ever been at the expense of others.

What can anyone do then, to turn the tide? Recycling is all well and good until you know where it goes. Littering the clean neighborhoods and the smart parts of town for fun is a great bit of activism, but we are still trapped. Raising awareness then, should be the baseline of what anyone can do, in every situation possible. So when someone says 'look at all this horrible litter' when you're in the park, REMIND THEM: "This litter may even still be here long after we are dead and is killing us all slowly anyway".

Suggested Further Reading: Desert (readdesert.org), Blessed Is The Flame (theanarchistlibrary.org), Anti-Tech Revolution Why And How? (T.J.K.), Can Life Survive? (Robert Hart), Black Seed: A Journal of Indigenous Anarchy (blackseed.anarchyplanet.org). An Invitation to Desertion by Bellamy Fitzpatrick, How the Stirner Eats Gods by Alejandro de Acosta, The Rebels Dark Laughter by Bruno Fillipi, I Am Also A Nihilist by Renzo Novatore, immediatism.com, Industrial Society and its Future by FC



Trash is everywhere, permeating almost every corner of civilization. We see vast rivers of it in the developing world, piles, oceans of so-called recycling that has been bulk-transited across the oceans in order to be 'processed' (burned or simply dumped) in the backyards of other people. It has become depressing, intolerable, abhorrent to witness for anyone mildly aware of the fallout from these practices.

Sadly, out of sight out of mind is the mantra, with garbage producing nations deliberately having nothing to do with the consequences of their actions. On top of this, garbage also permeates a hidden, invisible world that not many comfortably well off housed people see - the world of small creatures and animals, the world underwater, the world of the microscopic.

For this short essay we'll take a look at four types of ways garbage ends up living well beyond what it was originally intended to be used for, and we'll think about the worst case scenarios that this trash is already enabling. The figures, and death tolls for animals and humans, are unbelievable.

The Most Visible

You've seen 'litter' everywhere. It's on your street, shards of glass, chips of plastic, floating plastic bags. The most obvious form of garbage that we ignore every day. We're compelled to pick it up, deposit it in cans, put it somewhere no one can see it. Clean living for wealthy neighborhoods, the yuppiest and the most privileged areas are spotless, whereas the ghettos and streets where the unfortunates live are strewn with it.

Litter is a symbol of inequality, and all over the whole world the poorest peoples often live perched atop, or on the edge of, vast landfills of plastic. It's estimated 15 million people live in 'garbage dump communities' worldwide, either working or squatting among the remains, and the piles are growing every day. The US alone exports staggering figures like 157,000 shipping containers of plastic waste per year, or by some estimates, 436 million kg of trash in 2019.

Because, when you 'take your litter home' it doesn't stay in your home for long. It's scooped up and shipped abroad. This too is the fate of the litter in the streets, it isn't 'carefully disposed of' - everything that is MADE is never UNMADE, it is merely MOVED. Littering, in a way, doesn't matter, because no matter what we do the product is physically present, and must be dealt with.

For activists trying to raise awareness of this fact, littering the expensive neighborhoods on purpose is somewhat of an interesting proposal. Because the trash being 'tidied up' still has a long life, and afterlife, ahead of it. Making it invisible doesn't stop it hurting us in the long run.

The Less Visible

We're divorced so much from the natural world that it's almost impossible to account for all of the ways garbage and plastic disrupt the lives of species other than us. The invisible world of the garbage afterlife extends all the way down to the depths of the ocean floor, into the creeks and streams. Water is primarily the place that garbage ends up in, although in truth the forest floor, leaf litter, the verges of roads and many more are home to discarded objects of garbage.

While the most optimistic amongst us would like to believe that the bottles and cans are little refuges for insects and tiny mice and it's 'not so bad', plastic ingestion kills, for example, a million seabirds a year according to large nonprofit sources like the WWF. The prevalence of species living in landfills is because of the large amount of discarded food. Insects living off that food means roaming seabirds are attracted, and inadvertently swallow junk

In China, browsing 'garbage pigs' fatten off of landfills and are a casual menace, but also a source of income, to local farmers. Birds and beasts rely on trash dumps now more than their own environments, as fish stocks dwindle. While garbage does create its own ecosystems when it's piled together, and nature adapts, animals suffer because of the same reasons plastic is killing us - sometimes even more.

The Invisible

Imperishable products like plastic bottles have a life even longer than we understand, but their afterlife is much longer. Discarded products don't simply rot away into the ground, they compress, compact, shatter into pieces, leech toxins into groundwater, and become, as we will also discuss, a smaller, microscopic menace in our lives. The epidemic of microplastics has led to unfathomable headlines. It is in our blood, our organs, it is in the water, it is up in the clouds, it falls from the sky all the way from the Arctic to the Antarctic.

The Anthropocene Period refers to the fossil period we will leave behind, and currently the future of archeology from this period points to strata, layers upon layers, of plastic -infused soils, on the microscopic level. Plastic has a ridiculously long life before decomposing, somewhere up to 500 years, and all these pieces are a part of that decomposition. It does not go quietly, and as it does, harmful chemicals and gasses escape as well as microparticles.

These microplastics take the worst toll on the oceans, due to the sheer prevalence of these tiny shards and specks and beads all flowing in water. Floating garbage islands like the notorious Great Pacific Garbage Patch coalesce and spew particles, as ocean currents combine trash in a 'vortex'. Tiny animals ingest them, and their life cycles are interrupted.

A footnote? Marine life suffers here where previously it didn't - when we used glass containers more, and smashed them, the shards for all intents and purposes became just another rock in