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Praxis Radio 2020 Podcast
Episode 10: Feral, Montreal, QC

<orchestral music intro, “Praxis Theme” by Jason Cross continues to play under narration>

Taylor, the host of the show: “Welcome listeners, to a new installment of the 2020 season of Praxis. If this is your first episode, there are 9 previous and 2 yet to come, along with some impending bonus footage and more online. The best way to find it all is to subscribe anywhere you listen to podcasts or at praxisradio.com/subscribe. Last week was all over the place, geographically—from Portland to New Orleans to Denver, but this episode we’ll stay in one place, back in Montreal. If you heard episode 4 with Peter and Sandy, that’s the origin of this connection and this interview with Feral.

We met in her cozy space in person back in August 2015 and it’s been nice to hear the little apartment sounds—look out for the tapping of a small dog in this one—when it’s been so long since we’ve been able to be in other people’s personal spaces. In 2015, she was working with Anarchist Writer’s Bloc, which is currently inactive, and writing. We’ll start there before we flash into the present moment.

<music fades out>

Taylor (T): “So if you could just start by introducing yourself and a little bit about what you’re doing currently?”

Feral (F): “Ok, my name is Feral, I’m writing, I’m planning to travel. I’m staying in touch with people that I’ve met during my travels and keeping an eye on developments in those countries. Just mainly writing these days.

T: Mmhmm... and what’s your involvement in Anarchist Writer’s Bloc?

F: Well, I edit stories that come in and I’ve had a couple of stories published in *Subversions II* and *[Subversions] III*.

T: Mmhmm

F: I’m involved in some of the spinoff things in terms of supporting—some things are spinoffs and some things are just related. For example, we’re related to the anarchist theater festival, for example. And there are people who’ve been part of the Anarchist Writer’s Bloc who are now doing their own zines and doing their own art exhibits and so on, so we maintain a network kind of feeling.

T: And why do you think... so... cause it's a pretty robust community of people, it seems, between those projects and in this area in general. Why do you think so many anarchists are drawn to the arts?

F: Well, I think one this is that Quebec has always been oriented towards the arts as a means of political expression and so that's kind of natural for people to to express themselves in art here. And uh... as far as writing, I mean I think the Anarchist Writer's Bloc is— first of all just from the name itself...

<laughter>

F: ...and the idea of bringing um, Francophone and Anglophone people together working on a common project, if you've noticed, two of the *Subversions* are bilingual and the *Subversions II* is trilingual, which meant working with people in Italy to include Italian stories. This last time I think we could manage French and English and that's where we'll stay for now until we get people who want to edit in Spanish or Russian or whatever language.

T: Sure, yeah, that's exciting. And what's the...what's the reception been like?

F: I think it's pretty good. You know, we have cabarets that help to defray the costs of publishing and people are buying our books and so on. I find there's a lot of involvement, that the anarchist cabarets...I think a lot of people get introduced to the ideas of anarchism and the possibility of writing stories that reflect their anarchist perspectives and so...

T: Yeah, so can you give me an example of—I know it's so hard to summarize fiction, but—what's your favorite? You mentioned dystopian themes, what's your favorite piece of writing that you've done personally?

F: My favorite that I've done personally...well, the two stories I've had published in *Subversions II and III* kind of back to back. They involved some of the same characters and they— one is a continuation of the other, but I don't know if that's what I'll do this time. I think I'm going to move off into a different direction. I personally think dystopian themes are um, pretty much an assessment of the reality of the times we live in. I couldn't possibly be positive about what I see in the future. Although what is positive is the work that people are doing around the environment, social issues and so on, but there's—it's so immense. The monster that confronts us, the monster of capitalism is so... is so much bigger than I think most of us could even dream of.

T: Mmhmm

F: And confronting it? I just hope things will grow to be able to meet that challenge.

T: And how... how has that played out over your life? Which, I guess couched in that question is, how long have you been an anarchist?

F: Well, I like to say all my life. <laughs>

T: Yeah

F: Because I don't— I never accepted rules. I never felt comfortable with them. I never liked school rules or parent rules or you name it <laughs> and I never saw that anyone had a right to tell me how to live my life. I knew what I could see and it was up to me to decide what I was going to do with what I was seeing. But then you get a lot of backlash. And especially, I come from the older generation where, you know, I mean, we were doing duck and cover when I was a kid. <laughs> And uh, now... it seems only now, it's interesting with the issues around Hiroshima. I think that people are more interested now in looking at that than they ever have been in the whole time that I've been alive

T: That's good

F: It was always accepted as, 'well, it happened, and it's history', and so on. And I think that now people, especially in the environmental movement, are seeing that that's part of a larger political—it always was political—and that people were taught to accept it because it bought them their freedoms and their consumer culture and so on. And I think now that more people are seeing what a sham that is. They're beginning to see prices that people have paid for people in our developed society to have comforts. I think that a lot of—and it probably has to do with the fact that the economy is not this great booming thing it was in the 60s that gave everybody false hope that it was going to get better and better and better— and that young people now don't have the same kind of hopefulness toward the future that people of my generation had.

T: Mmhmm

F: And they're more open to seeing the mechanisms of control that have been exerted thru neoliberalism, the Washington consensus as its been imposed on Latin America. And I see a lot of... I see young people now who are coming together and finding a way to make their insights work and I'm...I'm so impressed with the courage of a lot of young people in the camps against the pipelines and against nuclear and, for example, in Northern Saskatchewan against building a nuclear dumpsite and everywhere. I think also because of our communications possibilities with the internet, it allows people from diverse places to support one another and to share with one another their experiences which kind of makes it more real to everybody.

T: And just to learn. I have a theory that I'm developing about that because I find that the people who most often disparage younger people are kind of staunchly, like, dogmatic, liberal older people?

F: Mmhmm

T: Who you'd think would say, 'oh, young people are our hope' and everything. And they tend to dismiss, because were not widely involved in the processes in voting...

F: Mmhmm

T: ...in kind of traditional reformist models. And they assume that's cause were too busy partying, or some... some theory, but I've found that it's really because a lot of people in my generation have done that analysis and have said 'none of this ever seems to work. Like, what's the deal?'

F: <laughs> Yeah

T: And maybe they haven't gone past there ...

F: ...stop trying to make the same mistakes again and again and again...

T: Yeah, and so it's refreshing to hear that and I hear it almost universally from people of older generations who are radicals, you know. But where was I going with that? I don't know... oh— I think that part of that, it's kind of a double edged sword, I think it has to do with... I think my generation is pretty adaptable in terms of we've grown up with all of this technology. I mean, I went just in my lifetime from having never used the internet, seeing it for the first time, and now I'm fully immersed, right? So we're used to just kind of, like, everything changes entirely every five years.

F: Yeah

T: So hopefully that will make us slightly able to deal with, like, climate change.

F: Well I'm... I'm drawing the line at Windows 10. I'm not going there. <laughs>

T: Drawing a line in the sand?

F: Not going to Windows 10. I'll stay out of the cloud and...

T: That's probably wise, yeah

F: In fact, I'm going the other way, going to, communicating through Tor network...

T: Mmhmm

F: Because it's...why hand them your life on a plate? So they can pick you over, you know? I'm off Facebook now. Facebook made a demand that I give them my 'authentic name' and that was another line in the sand.

T: Mmhmm

F: They gave me a week to give them my authentic name and so I just let it go and now I work on my blog.

T: So what's kind of the... how did you first become politically involved, to the extent that you did?

F: Well, there were different stages. When I still lived in the States it was during the 60s and I was very, very interested in the Yippies way of doing things—ridiculing the system, going to demonstrations, blowing my nose on a little American flag.

<laughter>

F: That was so *<laughs>* so radical. But I also saw that— because by the time I left the states to move to, to Montreal, you know Nixon was bombing Cambodia and Laos. Four students had just been shot at Kent State and more students were shot at Jackson State University and it was starting to look really, like, very, very impossible that we could win anything. Because suddenly, the forces that we were up against looked much more evil than they ever had. I mean they looked evil in the way that a teenager sees their parents, you know, kind of stopping them from growing and things like that. But once you really began to see the decisions that were being made that were costing people their lives, including American soldiers being sent over, I knew some people who had been drafted and were sent to Vietnam. And just before I moved to Montreal, I was living in Lake Placid and um, my apartment was a place where sometimes a draft resister would drop over and stay a couple of days to make preparations to cross the border into Canada.

T: Mmhmm

F: And at a certain point, my friends and I just followed. But I arrived in the, uh, nationalist upsurge just before the October Crisis so it's, probably... I really withdrew from anything political. I was raising kids. I didn't lose my consciousness so much as think, 'ok what do I do with this'. *<laughs>* And in the meantime, I had kids to raise. So now that, you know, once my kids got— even I think when my youngest one was still very young— I was back into working with women refugees and we'd form little ad hoc groups to support women refugees. Sometimes really spectacular success. There was a woman from Trinidad which is not considered to be a quote unquote 'refugee-producing' country, but we were able to work with a number of people in Trinidad to back up her claims which were that she had been a victim of domestic abuse... that the police wouldn't do anything about it. She had eight children which is one of the reasons that the government was really steadfast in trying to block her entrance. One of her kids, in fact, never was allowed to enter Canada because he turned eighteen during this time. But she was a real fighter she was really um, *<laughs>* she was an inspiration. So you know there were some things like that. Then I went to school. I started in a social work program at McGill and spent seven straight years in university. Then you know, working and just burning out, then... *<laughs>* then 9/11 happened and it kind of brought everything into focus for me— about how that was used to extend empire to global

proportions. And it also was part of a very polarizing process. I was living in a small town at the time where—in British Columbia—where people didn't think about politics very much. So if you'd start talking about things like that, like, 'look what's being done', you know, 'look at these wars' or this atrocity, the Twin Towers even was being used to extend empire and you get a lot of backlash for that.

T: Mmhmm

F: To me, I thought it was a kind of obvious conclusion.

T: You would think so...

F: Not to most people, so it was a lot of backlash against that. Now I think that people are....what I see in the past, say, year or so especially with the Black Lives Matter movement is that...people have learned a lot of lessons about organizing and about not backing down. And about organizing for our time. I mean, there were organizing methods and techniques that were appropriate for the 60s that wouldn't even work at all now. COINTELPRO on steroids you know, with the, you know, with the NSA being able to pinpoint...

T: Mmhmm

F: ...your exact location at any time in case they want to send a drone... <laughs>

T: Right

F: ...to see. And we know which way that's going. And I think that's, you know, a very sobering fact for a lot of activists who are thinking, 'well ok, we want to actually achieve something, not just make some noise...'

T: And feel a little better...

F: Yeah

T: ...about , 'at least we tried' or...

F: Yeah, exactly. I think that... I think that there is a lot of dedication to take it to the limit and I'm really happy to see that.

T: So kind of coming full circle, how do you think that storytelling, maybe through literature or art in general, how do you think that feeds back into that commitment, into that, like, understanding of....

F: Well, I mean there's two parts of that for me. Part of it is for me to be able to express what I maybe can't discuss verbally with people, but it also makes me look much deeper inside to see people's motivations for things and to actually... I mean I, as a writer, I

want to not just tell a story, but to tell it well and to tell it in a way that characters can actually be, like, dealing with issues that people are really dealing with. So, I want my dialogue to be real and I want someone to come to a story and feel as if they could know these people and that they're thinking about these things in a particular way. And maybe not everyone is going to agree with the way they deal with things, but that people are doing something. It's kind of the way I want to write and that's always tempered with my extreme dystopian view.

T: Mmhmm <laughs>

F: Sometimes wondering, you know, I won't even say it. <laughs> There's a lot of work to do. There's a lot of work to do. And a lot of people are going to make very big sacrifices to bring anything about and it's— it's sad in a way that there are so many people who don't care, but at the same time I see so many people who are really willing to um, put themselves on the line to the extreme, so... And I've seen that here and in South America. And you know, people who won't back down from the authorities just because they know that where they stand is right. So that's a great thing to see, but it's, you know, I guess coming full circle, the 60s were kind of...we had...we had a lot of room to imagine a better future. And I don't think there's any room for imagining anymore. I think it's 'do it'...

T: It's a bit more forced?

F: Yeah

T: It's 'adapt or die'

F: Yeah

T: Or maybe 'adapt and die anyway'

F: <laughs> That's great

T: I mean that's...

F: In history...

T: ...that's not what I lead with when I talk to people about it usually.

F: History teaches that is the cost for many people and sometimes when you are speaking the truth, that's going to be the cost. And I think it's good to... to consider the cost before you get into things. Consider both for yourself and for the people, for your comrades that you'll be, who will be depending on you, so that you don't imagine yourself in a place that you won't be able to sustain in the future and maybe let people down. I think all those things are very serious conversations we need to have with ourselves and amongst ourselves.

T: As to what we're personally willing to put out there?

F: Yeah, yeah. But I think it's from— especially some of the people that I've been with in South America who are fighting against mining interests and so on and they're used to their own numbers being killed. They're angry. They're sad. They'll memorialize, but they don't have any intention of stopping even though they're fully aware that the next bullet could be for them.

T: Yeah. Do you think culturally we'll ever get to that point in the US or in Canada? Just with the—because it's a collective culture, right, it's a family culture much more than here where we're pretty much in individualism mode.

F: Right

T: Like not every culture like that is here, there are exceptions to that, but on the mass scale, that's what we're dealing with. Do you think that, I don't know, it doesn't appear that like, threat of extinction is enough to get people out of that mindset

F: Right

T: So...

F: Well, worse is coming. So... *<laughs>* you know, there will be a lot more pressure so we'll see how people do respond to that. I think that there is— in a sense there's a big advantage to having lived under 500 years of colonialism. And you know, there are so many groups with really great analysis, like the Zapatistas have a really good analysis of...of empire and of the struggle of people to come out from under it. And they have a lot to teach. I think if people in these more privileged cultures are willing to listen or to be taught by people who have a much more developed perspective, a lot can be done, you know. And they have to you know, first of all, turn off their TV, maybe get off Facebook and you know, or limit it to a little bit. I think it's been disappointing to see so many people who just do all their activism on Facebook... *<laughs>* clicktivism...

T: Mmhmm

F: And you know, like passing along a good article is not the same thing as being in the streets and standing with other people against forces, you know. We'll see. We'll see how it goes."

T: Yeah, we'll see."

<music fades in under narration>

TRW: "Feral and I had a couple phone conversations and email exchanges in the time leading up to this follow up, and we'll reference a couple things you didn't hear from

that interview five years back. This phone interview picked up where we had left off, just a week ago, in December of 2020 and even though we focused on the bleak topics of dystopia, the memory hole, and the surveillance state, it was still a great conversation. We drop a lot of references to articles and links, and they should all be in the show notes for this episode. Here is that interview with Feral.”

<music fades out>

<sound of phone ringing and connecting>

Feral (F): “Hi there!

Taylor (T): “Hi, how are you?

F: Pretty good...*<chuckles>*

T: I think I have it from the other one, but do you mind just introducing yourself?

F: Ok

T: However you'd like to just so I can use that

F: I'm Feral, which says a lot. *<laughs>* Let's see. What can I say about myself? I'm in flux like everything else in the world. Looking at so many things... developing a kind of a viewpoint that holds steady in this world where everything is changing by the moment. I've been watching some videos that reminded me of some really important things. And one of the things that just struck me is that for me all along, I mean, the CIA has been an evil presence. And what I noticed now is that it's just hardly ever mentioned.

T: Yeah

F: When I came to Canada and before that, war was... everybody was united. In fact, it united across political parties and persuasions. People wanted an end to the [Vietnam] war and you know, for various reasons. It was a racist war, on both ends, most of the people going and dying were were men of color, were Black men. So you know, there was a consciousness that was developing around American imperialism. And somehow like, I've watched this and tried to figure out really how it came about that people consider going into the military as a career. You know, I have a friend whose son went in and is on Facebook and she... everybody was saying, 'tell him I say thank you for your service' and that... I'm scratching my head, cause what service? This is in service of an imperialist state that is bent on conquering the entire world for the benefit of the corporations that it represents. To me that's just background information...

T: Yeah

F: ...it seems to disappear.

T: Sorry, I don't want to interrupt.

F: No, no, go ahead.

T: I want to get into all of that, but you know, I came of age similarly I think in the timeline to how you did during Vietnam, I did during Iraq and then the so-called War on Terror and then that's been my entire life.

F: Right.

T: Now and... you know, obviously there's a lot of parallels people have drawn between, you know, Nixon and Trump, in some ways. So you left the US during the Nixon years. I just wonder in general, like, what do you think the parallels are and then where do you think that consciousness, like you said, has been lost to history?

F: Mmmm

T: Or what form do you see it alive in?

F: That's interesting... I think Nixon was infinitely more dangerous than Trump. Well, no, I can't even say that because Nixon had his own egotistical— I mean that's what caught him up was he taped himself *<laughs>*

T: Mmhmm *<laughs>*

F: But with Trump, it's almost the man is too buffoonish to be taken seriously. He's obviously been manipulated by forces in and around him that he doesn't even understand. He's, you know, a television personality. A failed businessman that somehow managed to get a lot of money *<audio glitches>* when someone gets a lot of money *<audio resumes normally>* you have to wonder about who they're connected to, you know, and I know people are like, researching that and so on. But Nixon started something with Henry Kissinger that was so overtly evil. For example you know, how they destroyed Chile. Which is reverberating to today...

T: Mmmm

F: And installed Pinochet who is like, fascist. Was fascist. Caused so much suffering, oh my gosh, the tortures and everything, supported by Nixon and Kissinger. But see all of that now has just folded into this dense background reality. So Trump is behaving like a nutcase, but torture's still going on and countries are being destroyed. And Yemen, there are pictures every day of children starving to death at the end of... the objects of a war that is funded and supported in various ways by the US... but it's all background. It doesn't matter anymore. And I think that one thing I remember about the Vietnam war years was that we actually felt the suffering of the people who were being destroyed. It was, I don't know how to say this. It's like My Lai, where you know, US soldiers raped and murdered a whole village of people just, it was insane. But this is still going on, you

know, like there were videos of Australian soldiers hunting down an Afghan peasant and shooting him and and it's just... for no reason. There's all of this. We're awash in it and I think, ok, there's a difference in the media. Back in the Vietnam years we had, like, TV. I don't know if it was even color, yeah, it was probably color by then, but it was graphic. And it hit people, but now... is it social media? I mean this is something that I'd really love to be able to discuss with people, like, all the various influences, but now it's amplified in a way in social media which gets back to [the documentary] *The Social Dilemma*. But for me, it goes back more than that, it goes back to the CIA. <sighs> And they've been developing their methods of mind control since the years of Allen Dulles when it first started. And I guess for me, it's important because when I came to Montreal, I was living in the McGill ghetto and there were still repercussions of the MK-Ultra experiments on mental patients at the Allan Memorial Hospital. And it was rumored, there were rumors, but there was a whole very strong interest in psychology, mind control research, still goes on, but like not overtly like the horror show that [Donald] Ewen Cameron did. But you know, now it's kinda... everything is just kind of, I don't know, it's like MK-Ultra mind control seems to have mind-controlled people in general into forgetting the importance of all of this.

T: Hmm

F: They, the CIA, now has a research lab with the federal government. I mean, this blows my mind as they used to say. I mean, it's just part of the landscape. Gosh, I don't even know what to do. But it comes down to something else, too, that I think that older people have in a way tried to adapt to changing times and, you know, affiliate with younger people and keep their ideas alive— some older people— but I think that we have something to offer that's missing. A historical perspective that provides tools for looking at social movements now. I mean, ok, even with the surveillance stuff. I mean, that's collecting information, but what they also do is disseminate information. And back in the COINTELPRO days it took like, a forged letter, a physically forged letter, you know, that could set off a rift between factions of a group and so on, but now it's so much more refined. They know...

T: Mmhmm

F: ...they are really...it's a high level game to them. It's a game of power. I mean, if you have all this power to manipulate people and you know their triggers and all of that, then you can expand it out into, like, mass behavior change, just by triggering the right things at the right time, you know? <laughs>

T: Mmhmm... and that's the story of— that's part of the story—that's the story that was more willingly told about the 2016 election in the US and social media was that these, you know, Russian troll farms and others were kind of, like, creating false accounts and just like you said, injecting information in to circulation...

F: Mmhmm

T: And that the way these tools... these... *<laughs>* I don't know if we should call them tools... the way that these *platforms* work is to effectively disseminate that. And I think that the focus on Russia exclusively is very convenient because obviously other actors, companies, governments are doing this too.

F: Oh yeah! Businesses and everything, you know? I mean even people like, some people that I follow on Twitter, you know, who are economists and former stockbrokers and stuff and they've said the stock market is completely detached from the economy right now...

T: Mmhmm

F: It looks... all these people lost their jobs, the stock market goes up? But they follow the trends and it does not correlate with what's actually happening because it's really become just a casino game for the rich. I mean these people and, you know, will say well don't focus on some cabal of you know, a deep state. Well, there is deep state and it's the CIA *<laughs>* and affiliated organizations that have the same purpose which is to bring about fascism. The merger of the state and corporations which we have now going on with the World Economic Forum. I mean, you should read their website, their program, it's just amazing. 'Shaping the future of this' and 'shaping the future'... Hey, you didn't ask me!

<laughter>

F: You didn't ask anybody I know how we want our future to be shaped!

T: Mmhmm

F: You know, but they're predicting for example, just kind of cold heartedly, the tech sector will rise, of course, because that fits their vision of the future. The people you know... like what happens to service workers? You know, they're saying, 'you'll get a guaranteed income' and...you know, you know. I mean the whole thing is so, so manipulated. And the thing is when I hear people talk about 'this is fascist' and 'that's fascist', you know, it doesn't rise to my level of analysis of fascism. You know, this is something like for example, all the leaders of like... Boris Johnson in the UK and Ardern in New Zealand and Biden now and Trudeau— they're all using the same phrases that come from the World Economic Forum. 'The Great reset' *<laughs>* you know...

T: 'Build back better'

F: 'building back better' *<laughs>*, yes!

T: Build *what* back and better than *what*, you know?'

F: Yeah, right, yes! Exactly! You know, it's just, it's funny. There was a remake of *The Manchurian Candidate*— just one line in it, but it is Meryl Streep or something? And she

plays the mother of the Manchurian candidate and she's a politician, she's a hard nosed... she has sold her son out for the success of her political ambitions and her slogan is 'we can be better'. And somebody says like, 'better at what?' And she says, 'just better'.

<laughter>

F: Something like that. It was like, all... it's a slogan. It sticks in people's minds. You say it again and again and again and people kind of rally around it. You know, like, Obama and 'hope and change' *<laughs>* you know...

T: Yeah....I....

F: I watched that happening and I thought, 'oh no...we won't be fooled again?' Oh, yes we will. *<laughs>*

T: Uh huh

F: Every time.

T: Yeah so I want to back up, for folks who maybe are listening who don't know some of this history. Obviously you and I would take all day and probably weeks to, like, go into the whole history around COINTELPRO...

F: Right

T: ...MK-Ultra as you were referencinG. I do plan to include in the show notes which you can see below the episode if you're listening on any platform, links to some like, documentaries and things like that, that you know, you and I can collaborate on making a list, so just for listeners to know if you're like, 'wait what are they talking about?' There's some resources down below, so.

F: Exactly

T: But when we talked five years ago, we did talk about COINTELPRO and kind of that legacy of disruption of social movements and surveillance, which, as you said, was much more rudimentary then— like, forging letters and spreading gossip. For me, I *<sigh>* find it really hard for like, personal mental health reasons and also just strategic activist reasons to balance the ideas of taking, like, basic precautions around my personal and digital security as an activist and like, descending into full on, like, paranoia around these things.

F: *<laughs>* Exactly, and paranoia is what they want...

T: And that's what people have....

F: One of their goals is to create paranoia.

T: Yeah, so one thing that I've seen— there's been some great work especially in the region I live in, in the Northwest, around groups combating organized white nationalism, advice for like activists and groups who are being doxxed— to be very public when you're attacked by these groups. To actually, like, have radical transparency. I think that's an interesting tactic, but what do you think based on the history and what we know about now, what do you think are practical tools and steps that people who are activists or aren't or people who are involved in movements can take to kind of both be practical and be healthy?

F: Right, really. Wow, well, I don't know. Like off the top of my head I think there are different kinds of activism that require different levels of security. So that's, like, a factor. Although, they want to know everything about everybody. In the 60s they were investigating peace groups and little women's groups and right now, like, I remember after 9/11 when they came out with the like 'total information awareness'. Oh great, here it comes... and you know, now we have it. Full blown surveillance state which is incredible. I mean Edward Snowden, there should be more talk about these people like Edward Snowden who has revealed a lot of what goes on and you know, and support for Wikileaks that made it possible for whistleblowers on the inside to leak government documents that the public should know about to Wikileaks without even Wikileaks being able to identify the source. That's an amazing technological achievement and, you know, now it's just under fire because all of news media are under fire. It's just disgusting. People are being dropped from Twitter and so, you know, there...it's an all-out war on peoples' right to have good information. And, you know, I read so many people and I don't agree with everything that everybody says, but I— they have a perspective that they've researched and they're disappearing. So to get back to what do I think people should do...<laughs> well I think it's important from my experience of speaking out and not having a support group around me—which was pretty awful—I would say make sure that you're tight with your affinity group or whatever you call it, you know, your special core of people that you can talk about things with. And I think that, you know, make sure that if you speak out, that you have people behind you because you'll be smeared, lies will be told about you, you know, things will happen to you that can just destroy your life. Your medical records will be changed, you know, your neighbors will start harassing you. So I think its really important to make sure you're not alone. And if you are, to be pretty circumspect about what you say and to whom you say it. I don't know. Very strange times we live in. I can't really...I can't really give any advice on that.

T: Yeah, that's completely fair I think. And part of it that I think is the most interesting that I'm planning...it's my...my New Years resolution, to be <laughs>...[to] get out of specifically Google's clutches, where I have lazily placed a lot of my information and life.

F: Me too, me too.

T: And there are a lot of great, again, I'll share a resource for getting out of that. You know, people are talking about this, which I think is hopeful and when you and I talked five years ago, we talked about kind of the catch 22 of the internet because you know we can, we *can* connect our struggles and we can access all this information, do all this research. And then you said, I'll just quote you and I'll play it if I find it, but uh you said

<faint echo of Feral saying the same in 2015 archival audio>

'I'm drawing the line at Windows 10, I'm staying out of the cloud, I'm going the other way.'

<laughter>

T: 'Why hand them your life on a plate?' Them being the tech companies.

F: *<laughs>* ...staying out of the cloud, sorry...

T: It's ok! It's like you said with the surveillance... it's like when Facebook— whether or not this was the original intent of Facebook, which I don't think it was Mark Zuckerberg's intent. His intent was to, like, rate the attractiveness of women on his campus at first, but he, but *we* built that surveillance network for them, for free.

F: Mmhmm

T: You know, we did hand them our movements and our networks and our connections on a plate. So yeah, sorry, you were going to say something about the cloud.

F: Oh yeah, it's now... is it Amazon? that has this cloud service and they've... I'll try to find this article and include it, is officially partnered with the NSA or CIA...

<laughter>

F: ...all of the bunch that have amalgamated under the Patriot Act in their Fusion Centers. *<laughs>*

T: Mmhmm

F: So you're just— if you use it, you're knowingly delivering it, like hand delivering it, to these people who will use it against you. They will use it in subtle ways to form a world around you that you have really no choice in moving within and so...

T: And I think something— something important about that. When people say, 'well, I don't have anything to hide', I think there's a real issue of privilege in that because if they're not using it against you, your use of it is endangering people more vulnerable than you.

F: Exactly, exactly.

T: And the lack of solidarity is troubling also. But I guess what do you think, you know, as a, as a lifelong anarchist, as you said, as someone who, you know, believes in that type of vision of freedom— what do you think a response or maybe like a subversion of these tools...I don't know, what do you think about an...an anarchist technological approach? Or is there not one?

F: Yeah, well, I don't know. Like I was recently talking with somebody who...in the AI field about that, you know, and he realizes it— that it's being shaped. Like, I wanted to know, like, what are the personal, the opinions of people who work in it, like what is their vision for how it should be shaped? Because... are any coworkers concerned about the kind of takeover of humans? <laughs> You know? And like bio... biotechnology and it's...trans-humanism is one of the goals of this [Klaus] Schwab at the World Economic Forum and a lot of the technology they're calling for is human-device interfaces and so on. So I mean, we know which way they want to go. How do we, hmm, how do we combat this? How do we...

T: Yeah

F: I don't know, cause we... it's...it's around us everywhere. And people offer arguments, 'well, if you needed a prosthetic leg...wouldn't you get one?' or whatever. There's something different from having a prosthetic leg to having a chip in your brain <laughs> that can control your mood and you know, it's control. It's about the control.

T: Yeah, and to me it's the... the coupling of it with fascism, right? Like, just for me personally...

F: Mmm

T: ...I think if someone... I think for my beliefs about bodily autonomy to be consistent, I'm like, if someone wants to do that and experiment on themselves, I don't care. In terms of, like, putting a chip in their brain, but it's the coupling of the control of that tech...

F: Mmhmm

T: ...being with these centralized, you know...

F: Yeah, exactly. It's a brave new world. And that's, that's...there are two books people should go back and read. You know, *Brave New World* and *1984*. And I saw an article at one point that compared the two visions of the future and, you know, talked about which one made more sense in terms of today and um, it was kind of interesting. I'll go back and try to find it and send it to you. I also didn't send you the recipe for the uh...

T: The quiche! The quiche?

F: Gosh, the quiche. There we go.

<laughter>

F: See, my brain...

T: Yes, this is what I need!

F: ...is starting to shut down.

T: I need the combination of recipes for quiche and essays about dystopia. I feel like it's a fusion between the two [books], but then with like a spoonful of *Fahrenheit 451* and like backdrop of ... of *[The] Parable of the Sower*.

F: Yes, I saw...uh huh, I saw somebody do a Venn diagram of those those books and how their intersection— I think the other one was *The Handmaid's Tale*?

T: Mmhmm

F: It was just there were...it was just interesting. It looked like, yeah, it's kind of what it looks like.

T: Yeah

F: But it's interesting because the... 1984's idea of the memory hole, the Wikipedia definition of it just, you know, talks about how things are being disappeared and facts that are inconvenient to the current order are just being disappeared and this was the function of the Ministry of Truth in 1984. And I was thinking of, you know, basically that's — that's happening now. The memory of the past and how it relates to now is just kind of... it's kind of gone. And you know, it's something to be— it's something that's preoccupying me right now is like I feel responsible as an old person who has these memories of different social developments, social movements, and how they evolved and run into another. And then the background of the CIA. And a lot of reading and a lot of <laughs> studies in university from media and propaganda to semiotics, postmodern theory, and everything, you know. And looking at all of this together and just seeing how our minds are manipulated. So, I think— what we need. Ok, here's what I would say <laughs> that people should do. Get together and talk about and be open about, like, questions that you have. Don't squelch questions. Get them out. Deal with them one at a time and also look at how, again, look into the CIA. Oh, my goodness...

T: I'll say to look at it and then people can draw their own conclusion, how's that?

F: I mean, I have a book review from Goodreads, I won't give the Amazon address, but it's about Allen Dulles, the first director of the CIA. That points at...I mean, you get to know the fact that these are Wall Street people who've always had business connections. The CIA took over the control of Europe, you know, for business reasons

and uh, everything else. It's been all over the world. I'll also send a link to a very long documentary on the CIA which was based on a book written by this guy, a defector from the CIA, and it features a couple of other people who give the lowdown on what the CIA did in the world. And for older people especially, like, I remember the names of these people who were killed like Patrice Lumumba.

T: Mmhmm

F: Never knew the whole story of how the CIA arranged it and things like that. So to go back and look at...to retrieve it from the memory hole <laughs>. To go back and look at what I thought was one thing turned out to be much deeper than that and speaks more of other things. I don't know. It's just... it's a dense subject and my brain is shutting down now.

T: Yeah, yeah. We can... we can wrap up in a second, but I really appreciate that idea of focusing on questions and also having older people who have lived through things talk. There's such a pressure that I feel, I think because of being on social media and also being part of like, I guess, contemporary left politics or whatever, there's a pressure for certainty...

F: Mmhmm, mmhmm

T: ...that is very pronounced. There's a pressure that you already have the right information, the right words,

F: Mmmm

T: You know...

F: Yeah

T: ...and that's just not possible...

F: Yeah— we used to say, 'question everything' and that's gone, too.

T: Uh huh, yeah. Just going back just to wrap, you know, you're a writer and that is how I first connected with you through Sandy, talking about kind of anarchist writing and all that. And we were talking about, you know, these dystopian texts. So I guess as a writer who's been in that specific genre and field, what— you don't have to answer this as a writer, it can be as a person too—but what is inspiring, like what or maybe even like, what questions are kind of keeping you moving on this like path of inquiry and like creativity and stuff even in these really dark times?

F: Mmmm....Well, the act of writing dystopian fiction it's all you have...I find all I have to do is look around and kind of extrapolate from, from this to things that could possibly you know, come from it. But I'm trying to be hopeful and see something that can come

out of things like, you know, community, small communities that get together. And you know, I've been to, like, a couple of the Zapatista communities Oventic and Roberto Barrios and on a small scale I've seen something really beautiful. The way they, the way they work and the only way we'll get to that is by being plunged into economic abyss where they are, you know? *<laughs>* And I first became interested in them in 1996 because I was also interested in anti-globalization movements and their movement, their coming out against the Mexican government, was based on that. Again, to follow them and get to know their scene and I think that, you know, like in terms of writing a hopeful... something hopeful in a dystopian work, I think I would look at what these people have done.

T: Mmhmm

F: You know, everything's by consensus and if it takes forever, it takes forever. *<laughs>* And um, but it's also something that is born out of 500 years of shared oppression. That perspective makes it very real and maybe if we go through enough, hard enough times, you know, people are saying, 'oh were heading into neo-feudalism' in which the tech class will rule and everybody else will be like a serf. *<laughs>* And so on, which you know, may bring us... I mean look at all the people being thrown out of their houses now. God, I can't believe it. The moratorium isn't even over and people are being evicted into the cold? It's just incredible. So this sounds like it could be like that or at least... to imagine something really dystopian, I don't have to imagine very hard.

T: Cha!

F: And what can come out of it? Because of necessity, communities will be created and let's see, you know, how they go. I mean the ones that will survive will do what the Zapatistas have done and that is have real consensus, you know. So yeah.

T: Yeah. That's such a good example, I appreciate that. That's a good reminder for me, too, to maybe revisit some of that writing and from from their initial declarations and stuff. Yeah. Well, thank you so much, thanks for being willing to talk to me multiple times and, like, prepare so many links and stuff. I really appreciate it.

F: Yeah, thank you for, like, reining me in.

<laughter>

T: That's my job.

F: When you haven't talked to anybody for days... I mean it's only been a day. I mean, but you know sometimes I don't talk to anybody for days. And I'll have a long conversation with some service representative on the phone *<laughs>* and then there was a message that said 'the call has been recorded'. And I thought, 'yeah you want to know that somebody's doing a good job? For representing your company? You know uh... heartfulness or whatever?' *<laughs>*

T: Yeah

F: Anyway, it's like, you know, it's like capitalism has invaded everything. It's just everywhere. Everything, there's a market for everything.

T: Mmhmm

F: That's why I really wish I could just go off in the woods and uh... I mean, I told you I lived on a mountain in a ten by ten cabin for fifteen months. And it was beautiful. It was absolutely beautiful. It was in BC on the Sunshine Coast.

T: Mmm mmhmm

F: I could do it again and I would love to, but as long as I know I'm ready to if I have to.

T: Yeah, cool... well

F: Are you... do you prep, by the way? Are you into prepping at all?

T: Um...I have made the goal to be. Over the coming year. That's my other New Years resolution. I read Octavia Butler's *Parables* for the first time and that really pushed me over the edge into being like, 'oh yeah I should be doing just some practical basic shit'. So slowly... bit by bit.

F: Yeah

T: It's interesting because I feel like it's culturally fraught out here...

F: Yeah

T: ...because...

F: Just don't tell anybody and don't join any groups.

T: Yeah, no, exactly, exactly yeah. It's just like... I live in probably the national headquarters of, like, militia folk.

F: Oh my goodness.

T: I mean, just living... I think like Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon, the border with Idaho is...that's where it's at, you know, and that's where I've always been. So I think even as someone with a radical critique, it's been hard for me to engage in that because I just have a lot of stereotypes and stuff. It's like...they're not *wrong*, they're just off, you know.

F: Yeah

T: It's like the same...

F: So much ignorance, you know, thank the CIA again for all the ignorance.

T: Yeah it's like these people... I mean, I think we talked about it before, we don't have to go off about it, but with Q Anon and even people who see some of the stuff we were just talking about with, you know, World Economic Forum and everything and their conclusion is like, antisemitic. Or that its like literal... a pedophile ring...

F: Right, right

T: ...or something, rather than— do you know what I mean?

F: That's the CIA again.

T: (addressing imaginary conspiracy theorists referenced) You're all... you're almost there, but you went in a weird direction! *<laughs>* Like, come back! Um, well... yeah, I think that's all I got, but I think yeah...

F: Yeah, ok. Well, I'm going to send you some links including a link to that kale...that kale thing.

T: Yeah, I've love it. I'll even put it in the show notes for everyone else in case they want to make it.

F: *<laughs>* Yeah

T: Cool

F: Alright

T: Well, I will talk to you soon

F: Ok."

T: I'll talk to you soon. Bye."

<music fades in>

<sound of phone disconnecting>

TRW: Thank you Feral for being so willing to talk with me about our 21st century dystopia, while still leaving me somehow slightly hopeful. And thanks to you all for listening. If you want to hear the earlier episodes of this season, or delve back into the archive of radio show episodes of Praxis, you can go to praxisradio.com that's p-r-

a-x-i-s-r-a-d-i-o. There's only two episodes left this season, and next week, we're returning to Denver to look at immigrant solidarity from the Obama years, through Trump, and well... back again? See you then.

<music fades out>

END