

Black Seed: Issue 7

A journal of indigenous anarchy

Various Authors

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Editorial

This issue of *Black Seed*, the seventh in five years, represents yet another editorial group change and yet another optimistic push for the project. We can now say that the project is indigenous-led, for what that's worth. We intended for this issue to be filled with manifestos about what that means, but perhaps these fragments say as much as we can in manifesto-language

Black Seed is a publication of an indigenous anarchy. Two words that mean a million or, to put it another way, we are here, from this place, and we are free from the rules that have come before us, from the ideologies of Empire and Colony. This ridiculous assertion is possible because whatever hope or vision we have for the future begins with the genocide of the people we come from and from an engrossing political fantasy that has entailed holding the contradictory positions of individual freedom (in the fantasy of liberal ideas that have freedom meaning the freedom of ownership and markets) with collective responsibility (meaning we are responsible for fixing the social problems that resulted from too much liberalism). Distinct from the neo-liberal collectivism of postmodern America is an indigenous anarchy and the practice and belief in here-ness and freedom.

Indigenous is a troubled word. We like that— because living is a troubled affair—but we understand the confusion when one feels unclear about our intention when using it. It is a classic “overloaded operator” in that it means several, more-or-less unrelated things, which rely on the context of the word more than the word itself. It means something similar but perhaps more general than “native” (as in Native American). It also means a spiritual connection to the place you inhabit that is indivisible. It is about blood and it is about land and it is about spirit.

Anarchy is a troubled word also. Anarchism is the political belief in a certain kind of world, with specific traditions, histories, and tensions; anarchy is the set of moments that have actually occurred, where that belief was actually put to a test. These specificities and distinctions do not exactly roll off the tongue. Not only does the term itself invite confusion but the partisans of the position are actively disagreeable. For us to use the word at all, we have to suffer association with others whose definitions we disagree with (and they us). But we refuse to let go of the brutal optimism of wanting a world free from terrible systems and their histories. We desire a freedom with the pedigree of Emma Goldman, Renzo Novatore, and the hundreds of years of native American resistance to colonization.

We still use the term green anarchy to describe our position but this issue begins a preference towards other words to describe the same things. We like green over terms such as primitivist, ecological, or environmental but that is because green says something that is more general when in fact we are more specific. We are pro-here-ists. We are located where we are, not a general humanist environmentalism that defends, for instance, human life above other life. We are related to you who live there only by the fact that the intricacies of our life connect and relate to yours. We recognize that most of your problems are yours and yours alone. We'd like to hear about them, especially in the pages of this paper, but know that we are not in that thing that the old-fashioned call solidarity. Even when we think you are right we now live in a time when the

ties that bind are loose indeed. We are not part of a high-minded project. We are each trying to survive and might only have that in common. We live in the cracks of empire, between surveillance and those who snitch, and in the inscrutability of our own position. Post-indian, post-left, and after call-out culture.

This issue features articles on veganism, fungi, and post-Indian aphorisms, interviews with the Ampoa Duta collective. It finishes the Talsetan Brothers interview from issue 5 (oops), and includes reviews of the IAF, Ellul and Voyer, and *The Uninhabitable Earth*.

There are dramatic updates to our website at:

<http://blackseed.anarchyplanet.org>.

By the time you see this issue, most older articles should be up at

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org>

Revolution of Fungal Life by Anonymous

The Revolution of Fungal Life: My Journey as an Anarchist into the Praxis of Mushroom Hunting

For the past seven years I've stepped away from a lot of my anarchist resistance projects and stepped into the forests of the Pacific Northwest. Learning about nature was always something I meant to do, but I put it off for years. Maybe I considered reading about the negative aspects of life emerging from our initial and continued separation from nature's rhythms to be absolutely necessary for demystifying the network of domination and my place in it, or maybe I thought breaking bank windows and spraypainting stencils and slogans was the most direct way I could make known my hatred of the totality of civilization, as well as the best way to encourage others to fight against it. When I was younger and my thoughts about anarchy were newer, I found myself drawn to many of the ideas within the green anarchist, pro-situationist, and insurrectionary anarchist tendencies. I spent a great deal of effort trying to further those ideas and practices, but I neglected to really engage with the non-human life that surrounded me. I failed to relearn those lost natural rhythms that, as I hypocritically told everyone who would listen, civilization was silencing. That isn't to say that I didn't know a few basic plants and their culinary or medicinal uses, but looking back now it feels like I was paying lip-service. All that changed for me when I began hunting and eating wild mushrooms.

I first ventured into the forest trails around my small city in search of Psilocybes. I've since discovered this is a common access point, where many others have found a deeper interest in mycology. I got myself the small field guide *All That the Rain Promises and More* and went out all fall. I didn't find any mushrooms, but while searching the fragrant, lush, rain-soaked forest floor I did find so many other fascinating fungal life forms. I was vegan at the time and already familiar with the commercial Portobello (*Agaricus*), Oyster (*Pleurotus*) and Shiitake (*Lentinula*) varieties at the store so I was really excited to find all of these edible and tasty mushrooms just popping up everywhere. For that first year I was too afraid to eat any of the ones I found, thanks to common conditioning about just how easy it is to poison yourself, so I just took them home and learned how to identify them. The following year I was a bit more ready, but I was still too scared to eat anything besides the foolproof basics: Lobsters (*Hypomyces Lactiflorum*), Chanterelles (*Cantharellus Formosus*, *Cascaden-sis*, and *Subalbidus*), Oysters (*Pleurotus* and *Pleurocybella*), Zeller's Boletes (*Xerocomellus Zellerii* and *Chrysenteron*), Shaggy Manes (*Coprinus Comatus*) and Shaggy Parasols (*Chlorophyllum Brunneum* and *Olivieri*). Occasionally I would go out with an older local anarchist mycologist/mushroom hunter who taught me tips to help pick some of the trickier species like Candy Caps (*Lactarius Rubidus*) and Shrimp Russulas (*Russula Xerampelina*). But it wasn't until my third year out, when I found my first Porcini (*Boletus Edulis*) that my mushroom hunting began in earnest. I had found and eaten a ton of other new mushrooms that year: the Prince *Agaricus* complex (*augustus* and *silvicola*), Hedgehogs (*Hydnum repandum* and *umbilicatum*), a Cauliflower (*Sparassis crispa*), Birch Boletes (*Leccinum*), Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus Gilbertsonii* and *Conifericola*), but, for reasons I have yet to fully understand, my first *Boletus Edulis* was a pivotal moment that altered the course of my life.

Where I live there are edible and medicinal fungi fruiting every season, so foraging quickly became a year-round activity for me. Truffles (Tuber) and certain medicinal polypores (Fomitopsis, Trametes) and lichens (Usnea) can be found in the winter, Morels (Morchella) and Spring King Boletes (Boletus Rex- veris) fruit throughout the spring and then into the summer the Agaricus augustus complex, Chicken of the Woods (Laetiporus), Reishis (Ganoderma), Lobsters (Hyphomyces), and Deer Mushrooms (Pluteus cervinus) emerge, until finally everything else pops up when the fall rains begin again. I used to assume that there were only four seasons, maybe five if you include harvest, but I now recognize that there are hundreds. Gathering became a passion that never ended and when I couldn't find mushrooms I began harvesting medicinal and edible plants. I soon realized that there were seasons within seasons. Cottonwood buds pop out from late January to mid February, Morchella Importuna fruit from mid March to late April, so if I want to collect a lot that year then I can't miss out on those brief windows. Eventually I began to feel that each new species I harvested represented a single note and as the season of each species layered with or followed the next, the procession of species became a repeating rhythm to me. I was beginning to make out the melody to an ancient and never-ending song, that I could play along with. But only if I were there, living closely amongst its natural composers, could I hear it loud enough to join in.

My joy for mushroom hunting led me to identification through taxonomy. I've always enjoyed noticing subtle differences. As an anarchist this helped me avoid traps through understanding and identifying nuances between the various left revolutionary factions—that, if I let them, would have tried to swindle away my creative energy to grow the political power of their organizations—and of course in the immense undertaking of categorizing all of the different forms of control deployed to maintain this culture of domination throughout its history. I've found that identification is the main holdup when it comes to picking wild mushrooms, but it's really not as difficult as most people are taught that it is; you just have to pay close attention to variations in form. Basically, every species is unique and has its own morphological features, and if you learn what parts to look for, then it's actually incredibly hard to poison yourself. I firmly believe that the majority of anarchists, who make it a practice to learn the terms used in the subversive theory they read, and who for the most part critically engage with each other over seemingly similar but actually different radical practices, are discerning and careful enough to master the fundamentals of mushroom taxonomy. While the technical literature uses some pretty loaded terminology (potentially problematic words like kingdom, order, retardant, pioneer, colonize, empirical, etc. or by classifying certain species as higher or lower, etc.) that many anarchists might find irritating, I still believe that it's worth it. Maybe we, as anarchists, could invent and advocate for better terms than what're available now.

Most mushrooms are either mycorrhizal or saprophytic or a mix of both in different stages of their life cycle, so I realized I needed to know the varieties of plant life that they were growing with, or feeding on, in order to locate them faster. With the help of keys, I did. Keys are tools that list what descriptors to look to whittle down to the exact species of mushrooms I found. Once I learned to key out most species of edible mushrooms and their plant partners, I just wanted to know who everyone else was. Now, when I walk through the forest, I know almost everyone there, which not only aids in finding the mushrooms I hunt for (by allowing me to view a fuller separation from form (ie, at a glance knowing that's a fallen alder leaf, not a mushroom) but has actually changed the way I interpret my walk from pretty and mysterious green scenery viewed almost monolithically into a constant reminder that I'm surrounded by life that I recognize and

can interact with. This becomes even more true when I return to regular patches and get to know specific individuals over years.

Although I am wholeheartedly opposed to cities, I have found myself living in them for most of my life. I've also, for financial reasons, never owned a car, so my mushroom hunting was for the most part limited to searching peoples yards and forest parks around my small city. I find myself doing serious mushroom derives to find new patches to harvest, wandering around on my bike, skateboard, or by foot, exploring new neighborhoods and city parks, making mental maps of trees in yards or wood chips in front of churches, the micro climates of certain neighborhoods, the distance to major roads, any evidence of pesticides or other sources of pollutants on stunted development of plant life and more. While on a mushroom derive I allow myself to be pulled by my own judgments, and it's more like the Situationists derive than the Surrealists drift, because I analyze the psycho- geography of the places I find myself in. Unlike both drift and derive, however, I am completely unimpressed by human structures and find my focus points to be, not architecture or side streets, but certain trees, grasses, or piles of wood chips. I often judge my immediate surroundings based on the amount and varieties of life that inhabit them. Forests and gardens, where there are hundreds of living things with endless intricacies to their relationships, become more and more appealing. When I go out on these mushroom derives, I usually end up violating private property laws, which is an excellent way to draw myself into new situations. I've made some friends by showing up on their lawn as a stranger, picking mushrooms and introducing myself. I have also been in a lot of altercations with asshole homeowners. Usually, I just calmly let them know that I don't respect their fucking bullshit middle class sensibilities. Sometimes I come back later and pick their backyards solely on principle. There's a map of the city I'm piecing together that's based on repeatedly visiting and checking on the health of individual mycelium. This is a life- affirming psychogeography, which, along with my developing critiques of mass society, industry, leftism, and technology. have now fully discredited any lingering sympathies for the Situationists' unitary urbanism. I know see unitary urbanism as a way for council communism to automate production in order to turn the whole of civilization into a series of city-wide Disneylands.

Through mushroom hunting I've become more sensitive to picking out natural relationships forming where they are, instead of where I assume they should be. Idealized nature is an impediment to direct connection. While I would prefer to spend most of my days meandering through ancient lowland old growth temperate rainforests of Doug fir and spruce, I find that I spend most of my time in the far more common places where those forests used to be. As I lament the loss of these epic climax ecosystems, I consciously choose not to compartmentalize wildlife into only those purest environments. I'm absolutely opposed to nature as spectacle and therefore seek out habitats (no matter how sparse their threads of relationships may be) that are around me and that I can engage with. This search has helped me more fully understand the plight faced daily by the creatures who endure life in the city and just where those creatures tend to congregate. Understanding the hardships they endure to stick it out in cities makes me examine parallels in my life. I admire that certain kind of tenacity required to exist in places one shouldn't. As an anarchist I've spent a considerable amount of time trying to kill the cop in my head. What I've found is that the state can't possibly monitor and act within the totality of its own terrain and I can exploit the illusion of total control if I rid myself of ingrained submissive behavior. A combination of a lack of state supervision and the infrastructure to repeatedly enforce its laws are what allow me to go beyond what I would normally allow myself to do. If I choose to, I can

then go on to support others in freeing themselves, and as those strings of relationships become more expansive, healthier, and diverse it is that much harder for the forces of social control to remove us. What begins as a few lichens, mosses, grasses, and weeds growing in cracks with a handful of mushroom species supporting them (either through a direct mycorrhizal nutrient exchange or indirectly through the mycelium's saprophytic digestive process as it breaks down complex, potentially toxic, compounds, cleaning the soil and exposing their roots to important, previously inaccessible, minerals) eventually becomes something more substantial when each passing day more and more biomass is added and repurposed, that build up of top- soil shifts to a different type, that is able to support tree life, larger animals, and other more temperamental specialized species. Those forgotten cracks become a functioning ecosystem. I call the places where this process occurs, capitalist non-spaces. They're the dark corners, peripheries, less-used and off-limits areas that are built into the city planning. Median strips between opposing lanes of traffic (where I've seen my biggest Boletus to date), abandoned fenced- off lots, and buffer zones between train tracks and residential property are only a few examples. These are places where, for some reason or another, nothing is supposed to happen. They're the un-trafficked temporary refuges for life—often mistakenly referred to as dead zones—that exist almost everywhere I look. The spiders in your house or the raccoon who eats your trash, the capitalist non-space is where they live. It's the psychic manifestation of the notion that everyone must have a socially legitimate reason in order to be somewhere or else face judgment. If I were somehow able to track the physical pathways that the herd uses daily and subsequently highlight them on a map, the negative space would likely represent non-spaces. It's where the herd seldom ventures, because built into its design is some utilitarian or aesthetic function that either purposefully or inadvertently, through law or through social norms, restricts or deters exploration. Nonspaces attract life because nature abhors a vacuum and because of the unstoppable force of entropy. These might seem like blanket statements, but to me they are some of the most inspiring forces of destruction and creation imaginable, carried out by individuals who, through study and over time, I've come to know. To notice these creatures build a hodgepodge ecosystem in an environment so hostile to life, was crucial to developing my own eco-anarchist ideas of the importance of place, and perhaps can serve as an example of what the forces driving ruination can offer to those of us who have similar goals.

Mushrooms, and fungi in general, play an enormous role in entropy, which is the basis for any future ecological equilibrium that will come along to reckon with civilization's disturbances. Fungi actively destroy historical artifacts, buildings, ships, and mines; they can derail trains and cause plane crashes, degrade the military's munitions stockpile, fuck up lawns, blight entire landscapes of mono-cropped agricultural staples, make un-sellable up to one-fifth of the global markets' annual wood supply, and, through mycotoxin buildups from molds in our bodies and pathogenic fungal infections, kill us. In the end, fungus will destroy every last thing civilization has ever constructed.

One of my strongest drives is to eat wild food that I've gathered myself, so entropy, through the processes of fungal decay, is the side I support. I want everywhere I go to be filled with even more complex ecological threads, not just because that means more interesting natural behavior for me to admire, but because that means cleaner, healthier, and more abundant food available for me and those I choose to share it with. By taking on a more active role in the ruination of this synthetic environment (which has been doomed from the start), I support the creation of the wild places that comfort me.

In the reordering of my worldview, which I consider to be a positive consequence shaped largely by mushroom hunting, an analysis of place became more important in my interpretation of crystallized power relations, the roles required to maintain them, the terrain created to fulfill it, and the mental conditioning required to navigate that terrain. When I observe society's routine movements, it makes total sense that capitalist non-spaces exist. The technology of speed (which I argue shapes civilization's historical development much more than wealth creation, despite Marxist theories to the contrary) is crucial for the reproduction of everyday life and has erased place in order to erase distance. Mostly the human herd moves from point A to point B as quickly as possible, and with the increased advances in the streamlining of transportation technology and infrastructure, anywhere in between becomes merely the nuisance of the daily commute. The inevitable erasure of place through the desired elimination of distance, coupled with industry's disastrous effects on the land, has turned just being in nature into a spectacle and a commodity. I've driven with friends on a road trip of seven and a half hours to spend a few nights camping in a pristine ecosystem that should exist right here in the deforested, shotgun shell-laden hills only a half an hour from where I live. I've seen others save up thousands of dollars to fly thousands of miles to Antarctica or a tropical coral reef somewhere. I think that by focusing so much on the exact place I am at the moment and my relation to the beings that make it up, I live my life in the present moment and am less plagued by the problems associated with being either past- or future- oriented. By hunting for mushrooms, a non-surrogate activity that engages my physical self, I'm also that much more able to remain present in my body.

Protective environmental legislation, campaigns for conservationism of environmentalist organizations, and the hands-off approach to those places deemed unworthy of our participation or protection, are all negative consequences of fetishizing pure, virgin eco-systems. The policing of forests with greenwashed, NGO-backed legislation is a threat to mushroom hunting and rewilding as a practice in general. Laws in California ban picking mushrooms entirely except in designated and policed parks where you are only allowed to pick five pounds. At first these restrictions were suggested by Bay Area liberal mycological societies who were reacting to the emerging influx of Asian commercial mushroom pickers, but later it was picked up by large policy-changing environmental nonprofits and has resulted in creating a network of outlaw mushroom hunters and an entire state where two whole generations have been denied access to and even guilty for what I consider to be the normal, natural animal inclination to forage for food and medicine. I've heard of environmentalists who've supported taking children out to go berry looking, because picking has a detrimental effect on the health of the overall forest. It's my view that these restrictions on gathering create a dangerous attitude of indifference when it comes to wild nature, which will lead to the further ecological devastation of the very places they want to protect. In an effort to keep nature a gorgeous spectacle to look at, environmental lobbyists pushed for and succeeded in expanding the budgets of the state's natural resource apparatuses. This filled the woods with khakied forest cops whose job is to police my actions in the wilderness. I think that if this pattern of legally harassing mushroom hunters continues, then all the practical knowledge that's been learned from successful sustainable wild harvesting practices over successive generations will be lost. It was important for me to learn how to look for bio-indicators of a places' health and strength so I can take the actions needed to ensure it's future harvest and to share that knowledge with others. It's only through the hands of direct interaction and not the lens of passive observation that intimate knowledge of an area over time is even able to be honed at all. Not exactly the same, but similar enough to mention here, were entire generations of truffle

cultivators who took what they knew about truffles to their deaths in the trenches of the world wars, or the lost swidden/fallow farming practices that either died along with the tribes that perfected them or were outlawed and driven underground during the long and bloody civilizing process forced upon the original people of the continent where I live. I don't want the only people to be allowed to do what they want in the forest to be capitalists and grad students and I don't want subsistence farming and the supermarket to be my only options for feeding myself. For the most part, picking mushrooms out of their mycelium is like picking fruits out of their tree, as long as the tree remains healthy and a few of the seeds end up in adequate germinating conditions then the fruit will come back next fruiting season and the tree will have passed on its genes to the next generation. Even though we know scientifically that picking mushrooms won't curtail their continued existence—and other factors such as competition with invasive species, habitat loss, climate change and pollution are the real main threats to mushroom populations—they still police me like a poacher. There are certain unsustainable harvesting practices, such as indiscriminately raking for truffles or denying a species their seasonal spore release by only picking the youngest firmest mushrooms (due to the shipping pressures of their short shelf lives), responsible for the decline in certain populations and disruptions in the nutrient exchange cycles of ecosystems. But I think these problems would go away if there wasn't a global market and its required infrastructure to facilitate their transportation and sale and if there wasn't the constant grinding economic determinism that forces hunters to over-harvest.

Mushroom hunting, and the skill sets needed for hunting and gathering in general, has given me a rewarding sense of autonomy, connection, and relief when confronted with the problems of food security and nutrition. I wasn't aware of just how broad the range was of wild foods seasonally available to me in my bioregion, or how related their nutritional profiles and gastronomic qualities were to their terrain. When I shop for what I can afford at the grocery store, I'm forced to make the choice between quality or quantity, both of which options pale in comparison to the nutritional value of a diet diverse in wild foods. So I gather them myself to supplement my meals, allowing me to afford the more quality foods I enjoy and not lose out on portion size. I feel that through fostering this kind of thrifty survivalist self-reliance, I have far fewer concerns about disruptions in supply chains caused by natural disasters, or people I could be friends with, I also have something beneficial, other than my limited defensive capabilities and my desire to escalate revolt, to offer to the people around me if they ever get so rebellious that the state does what empires throughout history have always done, and tries to implement starvation with itself as the solution. To paraphrase a dead guy I still respect: I spent my teenage years squatting and traveling. I've spent most of the last seven in the woods. I never forget a plant or mushroom I've gathered myself. I know how to accommodate myself for awhile and I am not the least bit afraid of ruins. I haven't the slightest doubt that I inhabit the earth. Let the bourgeoisie and essential proletarians rip apart their bright new world before they leave the stage of history, because I'll carry on forming better relationships with the natural world, and healthier ones, right here in this minute, throughout the collapse of the new.

Although I'm aware of the pitfalls of conservatism historically rooted in rural agricultural-based life, I consider permaculture land projects to be one of the last, and safest, healthy ways available for me to spend the rest of my daily life as free as I can. The biggest impediment I've faced, and I know this is true for many anarchists looking to form their own communities, is money. Land that's enough to support the kind of projects I want, but affordable enough to be realistic, is usually wrecked in some way by industry. Mushrooms are amazing bioremediators

able to clean up dangerous industrial wastes such as petroleum, and fecal and nuclear compounds. Knowing that I can work with fungi's mycoremediation capabilities mitigates my concerns about finding an acceptable, affordable place to live.

I admit that at the moment I don't have any skills in growing mycelium, but I plan to get them. Of course I'm interested in their magnificent culinary and medicinal uses, but in a much more profound way I want to practice growing mushrooms in order to begin my own personal mycoremediation campaign. My fascination with capitalist non-places and my desire to deepen the natural rhythms I enjoy, means I want to help these places heal from the degrading effects caused by industry and the disgusting inconsiderate behavior of the humans who surround me. I care about the health of the species that assemble themselves into the biosphere, but realize that I can only act from my position. Mycoremediation can allow me act, interact, and counteract in ways previously inaccessible to me.

For those of you who plan on, or who already are, confronting the architects responsible for this daily horror show directly, instead of acting in a more caretaker role, mushrooms can offer you up some powerful and subtle methods of attack that you can add to your arsenal of individual reprisal. Caesars have been poisoned by the same species of Amanitas (Phalloides, Virosa, Bisporigera, Ocreata, etc.) that you could find in your own neighborhood and use on their modern day counterparts. I've read that they taste delicious before they shut down your liver and painfully kill you over the next few days. Dehydrated and powdered, you could carry them around and add them to food and drink, and because of the time lapse prior to the onset of symptoms, you would still have time to leave the area before anyone's the wiser. If assassination isn't your jam, you could use those same methods to dose your enemies with psychedelics. One thing to keep in mind with dosing, is that cops and soldiers have weapons and react violently to most situations, but I suppose if you're going to go into open battle with the state's security forces then that destabilization could be life saving. Imagine watching the CSPAN videos on YouTube of Lindsey Graham and the other politicians high as fuck on the senate floor, coming to insane realizations about life live on air. Or the released CCTV footage of DOJ office workers ripping apart their cubicles and making love. Hilarious. It's not only their lives and world-views at stake. Perfecting the art of isolating cultures and colonizing substrates makes their whole oppressive physical landscape susceptible to intentional decay and entropy. Fungi like Heterobasidium, Lentinus, Acremonium, Aspergillus and Peziza, to briefly name a few, can truly make punk a threat again.

It's my belief that the psychedelic mushrooms in the Psilocybe family and the fungal based synthetic chemical LSD are powerful liberatory tools for the radical process of selfrecreation that I consider paramount to the anarchist project of freeing your mind. I can disrupt my socially conditioned parameters through accessing previously unaware realms of thought and redefine myself by placing focus and intention on strengthening the drives that matter most to me and choosing to ignore and let whither those that don't serve me anymore (and maybe never did). By undoing myself in order to rebuild myself, I consider the whole experience less of an ego death and more of an exercise in egoist depth. While I haven't used Psilocybes in years, and I certainly don't condone their abuse or believe they were instrumental to human evolution, I do strongly advocate for their use in this way.

I am an atheist and my deeply materialistic worldview has no room for spooks of any kind. I do my best not to believe in things that aren't there and am generally hostile to ideas that can't be reasoned out or proven. Although I have a critique of technology and science, I find the scientific

method to be one of the most helpful ways to make sense of the universe and my tiny place in it. Yet, surprisingly, I find myself feeling deeply spiritual when I'm on my knees at the base of a Douglas fir picking chanterelles. I even sort of worship them. When I've been walking in the rain, deep through the woods all day, and I'm tired, wet, cold, sore, cut up from brambles, stabbed by branches, and a little bit lost, I feel a kind of personal peace and contentment that comes along with non-surrogate activities. When I fill baskets full of my favorite mushrooms it almost feels like my ordeal is an offering and I'm rewarded for it with an epic harvest by my ancient dark gods, those tangled webs of filamentous hyphae that in silence have, for over half a billion years, destroyed and recreated the world over and over.

When approached to share my thoughts about mushrooms and how my experience with them relates to the anarchist project, I didn't think it did. But after exploring the ideas brought up in this piece, I now see that they have a lot to offer each other and I hope I made some of that clearer by sharing my story with you. This piece again reminds me of the mushroom life cycle: my thought process as the mycelium, my story as the mushroom, the ideas dispersing as spores, you the reader as the suitable germinating environment, and what you do with those ideas. The successful spread into new places. May my spores find you well and their germination spread the collapse of this bright new world in unforeseeable ways.

(Disclaimer, this is for entertainment purposes only and in no way do I condone anyone doing super cool stuff like breaking the herd's precious little laws.)

Whatever-Veganism by Aragorn!

A mild critique

This is challenging to write because of my mixed feelings on the topic. I am the person I am going to critique here but I'll be described by readers as having no idea what I am talking about. I will speak to reason, ethics, social cliques, and aesthetics but am no expert in any of them and will therefore be dismissed out of hand. I have no answer as to how to how **you** should navigate the ethics or personal relationship you have to your food, to the fundamental way you live in this world, which means that the last paragraph of this article will not sum it up they way you might hope it would. It will begin with how It'll end.

You have individual choice about how you relate to what you consume. This is true of food, of entertainment, and of how you intoxicate yourself. It is kind of sad, because most of us have really poor judgment about ourselves, especially our body, our mind, and our possible futures. We are terrible advocates for our own position. Our choices should be social decisions that make sense to a shared sense of responsibility, advocacy, and timing. We should think about what we do in the context of a set of cultural values that we share with others or, better yet, that we make with others in a healthy and humane way. Instead, to the extent that we have people, or, ahem, communities, they are only truly social in the most transparently shallow ways. Sociability is more a matter of affect, of how we appear as a group, rather than how we *do* group.

There was this great situationist pamphlet series called *The Situationist Times* (they are shared as PDFs on libcom) that punched up the SI in the 80s. I'm recalling a piece that's been reprinted a million times, that has a list of social roles, that I first saw in *The Situationist Times*. Social workers, architects, teachers, and the like in a left hand column, while on the right it just says "cop." On the one hand is the label of your social role, on the other is what you actually are. Beautiful simplicity that still sums up two important points. One is that we are quick to wrap a person up in a word and rightfully write them off as a result. The other is that this demonstrates an idiotic simplicity to our thinking and how we, as radicals, see the world. Yes, social workers are cops but that is not how they see themselves. It is not how the world at large sees them. Our insistence that we are right (to call them cops and as a result write them off entirely) is a hallmark of the role that a radical plays in society. Standing firm on a position that is both true and, basically, meaningless.

If this article is successful then you won't change a thing about yourself. You'll continue eating as you do, calling yourself what you were, but perhaps you'll have a bit more humility in regards to how you interact with other people. Frankly this article is not really about veganism at all, but about the kind of logic that radicals find themselves trapped by. Veganism is but one example, there are many others. All can be boiled down to a simple maxim: radicals have no chill. It's a big turn off that I have spent most of my adult life resisting, while at the same time being utterly captivated by. Recent writing on the topic has finally inspired me to write this but it's been due for at least a decade as I've changed around these issues... as I have gained chill.

What is true

It is true that as a percentage, livestock represents close to two thirds of all animal biomass on earth. Humans are about one quarter and all wild animals are the rest. Agriculture represents something like 18% of all greenhouse gases. Industrial agriculture produces 100 times more manure than municipal waste. It is inarguable that the production of livestock has a large environmental impact but any measure of the resource impact of feeding 7+ billion comes up with sobering results. In short, there is no sustainable way to do it.

Veganism (ie the ideology of a vegan diet) makes three kinds of arguments advocating for itself: rational arguments about resources; ethical/moral arguments about life and the value of it; personal arguments about health, wealth, and aesthetics. It is interesting that the PETA link I'll share in the footnotes mostly argues in the third area. When I was first exposed to vegetarian ideas in the 80s rational and ethical arguments were primary. Clearly the audience has changed from those who are rationally concerned about the fate of the world and their place in it, to something we'll call more general.

Perhaps this is an appropriate time to bring up my own history. I grew up in a small midwestern city. As a young punk I was exposed to many of the different flavors of punk (skinheads, goths, rockabillys, etc.) and in our town there was exactly one vegetarian (this was the mid 80s. Times were rather different.). Even though my father claimed to be a vegetarian when he was a kid (whatever) I was not really introduced to vegetarian ideas until the late 80s. I was then vegetarian for about 24 years, and of those, vegan for 22. I've now been an omnivore for about seven years. I am the ex-vegan I made fun of for the better part of 20 years and part of this article is my reconciliation with that fact.

What is differently true

I am ignoring a lot of the process details and the argumentation that allowed me to pass from one position to another because I am reticent to invite you into that part of my life until you've met me half way. I assume now, more than ever, that we aren't exactly friends, that we don't share a lot of cultural indicators or the easy flow of it. My bands aren't yours. My experiences are from a time different than yours. I hate nostalgia but recognize its pull.

Obviously I am talking around the tritest of points. As my anarchist worldview has aged it has gradually lost the need for new, young, fresh faces. Of course I get a lot of energy and excitement from other people's excitement, but I no longer require it. I have been disappointed far too often to count on it in any way different from the inspiration of seeing a good band, eating a sweet, or feeling the cloying, pathetic phenomenon known as nostalgia. Yes, it is true, I have become more pessimistic, but even that has grown boring. What my aging has really looked like is that the giant steps we used to take, even if rhetorically, between mountain tops aren't possible any more. Anarchism, and the anarchists who try to live it, have become small and hostile to the kind of imagination I remember.

Partially this is a good thing (even if I am not included). It is good to stick to your local scene. It is good to do your small witchy projects that are more about your little sexy crew than about something world-changing, the size of a country or language space; it is better to become

generationally indecipherable. I am not your friend. Do things for and with your friends. Fail. Do it gloriously. Leave us behind.

Insofar as this relates to veganism or anarcho-veganism it is better to write your truth and know that it doesn't mean anything beyond your social clique. Don't confuse yourself about that. But, to relate it back to my time, we actually took a band that called itself Vegan Reich seriously enough to believe their utter bullshit about the scale of their ambition and their stupidity around caring about others. They (the band and the "hardline" movement) actually related their activity to the Third fucking Reich and implied they desired to violently implement their half-assed ideas (they were all in their early 20s) across the entire world. This was then, as similar ideas are now, the exact same thing as colonization. This is cossacked men coming to a new world, declaring the residents to be savages who should be cut down like timber, and then doing it. Letting the next generation (or 10) deal with the hand-wringing and concern of how terrible were the actions that created the world they lived in. It is the perfect example of burning the world and letting our children deal with the consequences.

And it is why anarchism, veganism, and other associated ideas will never change the world in any sort of meaningful way. The conservative (meaning the desire to keep things the same) impulses of liberalism, progressives, and even Conservatives (ie right wingers of any stripe) will fight any sort of radicalism when they sprout. This is easiest to see when the radicalism presents itself as a fighting set of ideas (like any kind of vegan crusade). Sure, maybe they are right and proper (in the eyes of the position), but nothing creates a reaction as much as a holy crusade. This new anarcho-veganism demonstrates this in such technicolor that maybe even they'll recognize it.

What is said

Almost every argument made in the defense of anarcho-veganism is partially true and mostly false. I'll use the most recent "challenge to the dominant anthropocentric narrative" as an example. (*Biting Back: A radical response to non-vegan arguments* see sidebar [The Anarchist Library editor: text at end of this article])

In my earlier construction of three kinds of arguments for veganism (rational, ethical/moral, and aesthetic), these four arguments are in order: ethical, rational, rational plus, and aesthetic. Before I get to the specifics of each argument, I'll talk them through. Each of them has underlying biases that are interesting and speak to three things: a model of social transformation, a belief in social transformation, and an aesthetic sensibility that has changed since veganism of yore.

First let's define speciesism as it is clearly an important idea for the author of *Biting Back*.

Speciesism, like many other isms, is based on a line of thinking which views certain unchosen traits as inherently superior over others. Racists think they are superior because of their race, sexists think they are superior because of their sex, speciesists think they are superior because of their species. Speciesism arises out of an anthropocentric view of the world in which an individual holds the belief that the human is the most important animal and therefore has the right to subjugate other animals based on species.

Sexism, racism, homophobia, etc are compelling insults when you first hear them but fade over time as you recognize them as unavoidable aspects of living in a world filled with preferences that

are not your own, and people who are horrible and pleasant in ways not necessarily related to how quantifiable their sexism, racism, and homophobia are. Speciesism is lined up, especially by this author's tone, as something one could live with in a human being. While obviously, by their definition, a specist sounds like lousy company (just as cartoon sexists, racists, and homophobes do), their *working* definition of speciesism probably sounds a lot more like "humans and animals are different." Now our fight is about definitions and not so clearly a story about good and evil.

Now, on to the central points. The first is the question of defining what is and is not colonization of and for other people. The premise of this point speaks to the arrogance and obliviousness of radical discourse in the 21st century. It is fine and fair for us to have a shared conversation about what is and is not colonization but, like gentrification, The State, and Capitalism, we are literally on the outside looking in. We are not the active agents of these enormous systems of control, domination, and oppression. We—and by this we I mean 99% of the readers of these words—are the victims here. Radicals using the same terms to describe those they disagree with as those they accuse of structurally causing the issues, is the kind of flattening and simplifying of reality that causes radical arguments to be dismissed out of hand.

That said, this argument is interesting. If you see veganism as a sub- or counterculture, the phenomenon of native people becoming vegan (or into metal or whatever) is a demonstration that native people are humans, who live in a modern social environments where they are exposed to the same information and subcultures that the rest of us are. The idea that veganism is both a kind of colonization of natives and one that natives might also choose is a way to understand that perhaps the world doesn't work the way you think it does. Multiple contradictory things happen all the time. Indigenous people are both independent actors and victims of logics (like yours) that would disappear them into the ideology of the frontier, veganism, genocide, and colonization. At some point indigenous people aren't the landscape upon which you get to make your choices, but are makers of some of their own. This means that many indigenous people see their relationship to food as a spiritual one that is not parse-able by vegan quantification of life and suffering into debate topics. Others might agree with vegan logic.

The second point is that factory farming and capitalist logic are two distinct categories to consider when measuring the ethics of the food we eat. Everyone who cares about the food they put in their body takes measure. This measure is along rational, ethical, and aesthetic lines. All three of those lines tend to value certain parts of the human project that I think are worth interrogating. One argument that many, if not most, tend to make around topics of diet as if their goal is to fill the planet with humans. I think that *Ishmael* was strongly argued on this point. It said that human population will grow to use the supply of food. A common vegan argument is that it takes less agricultural resources to feed a human with a vegan diet. Both of these arguments are thinking about a desirable & rational future based on diet. The author of *Biting Back* centers their definition of speciesism and hierarchy to make an ethical argument against animal use and tries to draw a distinction between "use value" and what we'll call living value. *Biting Back* even goes so far as to say that ATR (After the Revolution) "elimination of human supremacy on a personal level will create new relationships with non-human animals—relationships based on respect for their right to bodily autonomy and freedom from human domination." Is it possible for *Biting Back* to imagine a current relationship to animals that is respectful and free? To return to the conversation about indigeneity, most natives would be insulted to be told their current relationship to non-humans is about "human supremacy" but I'll leave it at the fact that ethical arguments go both ways. Finally while the aesthetics of factory farming are pretty general (everybody hates it)

it's not as if many people who enjoy it are in love with the aesthetics around fourth wave booj vegan food either.

Third point. Veganism isn't inherently anti-capitalist. I'm starting to feel repetitious here but we live in a hierarchical society. The definition of society could be argued to include hierarchy in its definition. While anarchists are generally against hierarchy there is an important line, or distinction, where we have to understand what our fight is actually against. Is it a fight against bad words, or behaviors that could be described using bad words? Is it a snipe hunt that never ends? Or is it a fight for autonomy, and if so, where does that fight begin and end? For *Biting Back* it appears that challenging the "socially constructed hierarchy of human supremacy that normalizes our consumption of [animals]" is their project. Fine, go for it, but your tone and totalizing, name-calling attitude does little but paint you as the new Hardline.

Finally (and I'm getting bored of this exercise myself) is the point that *Biting Back* is responding to, that "I'm not contributing to animal oppression because I only steal or dumpster animal products." Capitalism is a logic that extends beyond trains, automobiles, and animals. It objectifies all of the things and turns them into fixed and measurable quantities. It does not care about what is not quantifiable. Animal pain, oppression by any definition, or whether you like or hate something is more or less irrelevant in the capitalist imagination because it doesn't measure on the bottom line. To the extent to which capitalist logic recognizes new features of a commodity, it is when new features add to the value. The rise in "Impossible Meat" has just this week been added to the menus of both Burger King and Del Taco menus. Congratulations, your activism around the potential new form of relationship humans could have with animals has created a product demand that has been satisfied. Any problem that can be solved by the market will be.

Obviously neither the dumpster diver nor vegan has meatless meat as a goal, but it is something being done and for a certain percentage of people that is enough. For the rest, the line gets muddy. *Biting Back* argues, weakly, that the commodity form described above can only be solved by developing a non-hierarchical relationship to animals. Great argument if it were true, but any evidence here goes the other way. Relationships based on non-capitalist values are extra-capitalist, not anticapitalist. The market churns on, and those of us who might desire another way of living have to find it in the cracks and spaces we can crack open. There are no magic bullet answers like dumpster diving, stealing, or metaphysical relationships to nonhuman animals.

Pro health

Please note that I am not arguing for any particular diet as a solution or alternative to veganism. At heart, diet ends up being about a lot more than healthy bodies, and I am not the judge of your choices. Identity, whether we like it or not, has a central component that relates to how, when, and under what condition we eat. To tell someone what to do with regard to diet is a way to tell them how to be a human. Someone who demands they know how to do that better than you is determined to be disappointing.

I guess my point in writing this is to reflect on my own bad choices. I confused *my* radical, alternative, choices with correct ones. I didn't notice that for many years my extreme position wasn't so different from the fat, lazy, american diet I'd privately accuse others of having. I didn't notice that the food may have been different but the structural way I related to others, to the food I ate, to my body in this world, was similar to others I judged. To put it as pointedly as I possibly

can, no matter what I call my diet I still mostly eat out of packages. I still “prepare food” in the same way a short order cook prepares food. I open packages. I am still several orders of remove from how I eat, relying on capitalist logic to determine how organic, pure, and wholesome my food is. I trust the labels so much I never check on them and don’t have the food chemistry setup to really know how many kilocalories are used or burned. I rarely eat what could be called whole foods. Whether vegan or omnivore I am a consumer of food. I, like 99% of the rest of you, am utterly powerless to feed myself if there isn’t a store involved. I can’t process wheat, animals, or anything beyond walking through a garden with my fingers crossed.

If I were going to start this entire conversation over it would be entirely different. I wouldn’t start with what units-of-food I put in my mouth. It would start with how would I, and my people, feed ourselves without stores. I’d take a sober measure as to what is possible in the city vs the not-city. I’d talk about health, perhaps even from the perspective of rationality, ethics, and aesthetics. But I am mostly someone who eats like a bachelor in the city and every option is shitty. I ballooned as a vegan. I’m slowly finding a way to not kill myself as a post-vegan. Every option is shitty.

But I will not stand idly by watching a generation of anarcho-vegans without at least mentioning, to the few who will listen, that spinning up a moral crusade—with all the personal animus and hard words—has shit all to do with the stated goal. Be vegan. Be happy enough with your own choices to live with them. Stop changing the subject to what me and mine are doing. I’ve seen too many generations of post-vegans become post-anarchist, post-caring, post-trying, post-friends to not see some connection between Crusaders and people comfortable in their own skin. Don’t take my word for it. Look around at your crew. Reflect on the people you have chosen, those who chose you, and consider if you are in it for the long haul. I didn’t like the answer when I did this exercise. I changed.

I wish I could end this by saying that I found a social answer to this problem. I did not. I found love but nothing deeper. I didn’t find the love of community, or of belief. I found other broken people to consider the questions that veganism tried to answer for me over the years, but never did. I found individuals who tried to find anarchy with me but failed. I still reflect positively on my times as a vegan, the potlucks, the friends, but in the final analysis I have to say that those relationships were shallow and the things we claimed to be fighting for would be better described with different terms and language-sets all together.

resources

<https://www.petalatino.com/en/blog/reasons-to-go-vegan-in-the-new-year/>

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/biting-back-a-radical-response-to-non-vegan-anarchists>

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/andrew-x-give-up-activism>

Biting Back: A radical response to non-vegan arguments (excerpt)

1. *Imposing veganism is a colonial practice because killing and eating meat is an essential aspect of many indigenous communities.*

One need not look far to realize that there are a great number of indigenous people who are vegan today as well as a number of indigenous people whose customs never centered on consuming animals. There is no monolithic indigenous culture to evoke and therefore the gesture is meaningless. There are only multitudes of indigenous people with their own beliefs and customs. Attempting to justify

hunting and/or non-human animal consumption by romanticizing Indigenous people only plays a role in homogenizing the experiences of all indigenous peoples.

2. I oppose factory farming but there is nothing wrong with killing animals outside of capitalism.

...At the core of speciesism is a hierarchical relationship between human and non-human animals (which is reflected in their everyday use for entertainment, pharmaceutical testing, and fashion trends involving their skin and fur) which justifies their oppression beyond just capitalism. Since the social relationship to non-human animals has been heavily shaped by capitalism, they are viewed as manufactured commodities rather than living beings capable of experiencing pain and suffering. While the elimination of capitalism and factory farming will end the institutionalized manifestations of speciesism, only an elimination of human supremacy on a personal level will create new relationships with non-human animals—relationships based on respect for their right to bodily autonomy and freedom from human domination.

3. Veganism is only a consumer activity and not inherently anti-capitalist. Boycotts don't change anything.

Speciesism is normalized through individual participation in a broader social program that objectifies non-human animals and places them below humans as commodities to consume. Taking part in this process of objectification normalizes the existence of oppressive thinking and ideology in anarchist spaces. It is an incomplete observation to say veganism is only concerned with food; it opens new avenues of thinking in terms of our relationship to non-human animals, while challenging a socially constructed hierarchy of human supremacy that normalizes our consumption of them.

4. I'm not contributing to animal oppression because I only steal or dumpster animal products.

Simply put, dumpstering animal products undermines the necessity for developing personal non-hierarchical relationships with non-human animals which destroy their assigned commodity status.

Towards an Anthropology as Science Fiction by Dominique Ganawaabi

Not long ago, Primitivism was a significant strand of North American anarchy. During the period of the WTO protests (culminating in the Battle of Seattle) and through the Green Scare repression of environmentalists, John Zerzan's ideas, about the dangers of technology were undeniably important to many on the left. Acting as a sort of fatherly spokesman for the shadowy figures of black bloc and clandestine eco-saboteurs, he communicated dangerous critiques of civilization, in a language that vaguely progressive readers could relate to, in interviews to large media outlets like *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *Vice News*. Those were perhaps more hopeful times. Protesters in Seattle were able to disrupt power in a way that seemed impossible before. Environmentalists and animal rights activists had a set of militant tactics that could cause some amount of damage to the systems they hated. It felt like we were winning and Zerzan was ready to suggest that even though things are always getting worse, our position was gaining momentum. "I really feel that we're getting to the point— and perhaps this is wishful thinking— that these ideas are about to burst on the scene." A time was coming in the future when anarchism would become mainstream. The situation *has* changed since then. It can be admitted that anarchists as a subculture are surely early adopters of practices that eventually spread to the wider society. For example, the formal sexual consent model and privilege discourses that were a part of the scene a decade ago, are now employed by corporate news pundits and politicians. Not all of us see this popularization as a victory. Today, radicals are seemingly more concerned with race and gender issues (mostly playing out on social media) than with globalization or climate change. Even though all of these problems were and continue to be equally relevant, priorities change over time. The easiest way to discredit Primitivism given the current climate would be to accuse it of racism towards indigenous people. While Derrick Jensen's Deep Green Resistance was essentially removed from the anarchist space for taking the wrong position on transgender issues, Zerzan's peculiar use of anthropology has thus far avoided facing similar consequences. The mere use of the word "primitive" might almost be enough to entice a purge but this kind of response would also mean not engaging with the things of value that they have to offer: namely, the idea that civilization needs to be destroyed just as much as capitalism and the nation state.

What Primitivism gets right is unfortunately difficult to access because of *how* its proponents communicate their ideas. More troubling (at least to me) than the possible racism or sloppy methodology are the rigidity of thought, totalizing worldview, and unflinching ideological hubris. Rejecting the trickster spirit in native theory as postmodern is more objectionable here than disagreements over specific definitions of wildness or domestication. Coyote has always resisted easy categorization. Zerzan comes away from a brush with a trickster saying...

Going against all that is forbidden, trickster is a comic inversion of the official story, he deconstructs social limits. As Nanabozho of the Ojibway tradition, he is alternately the

savior of his people, and a buffoon and sexual aggressor. I offer the words of this essay in acknowledgment of my place as a non-native outsider, in hopes of possible, if slight use-value. Anarcho-primitivist in orientation, I respect and am deeply inspired by the indigenous dimension, past and present. Postmodernism, in particular and in its more general cultural sense, has pitted itself against the idea of creation stories and grounded Trickster realities. The voice of cynicism, isolation, and technological ungroundedness, postmodernism insists on the "effacement of historical origins and endings." Accepting the fragmented and depthless reality of mass society, postmodernism is the turn away from traditions, away from origins, to the weightless zone of surface and word play.

We have to wonder how he conceives of a storytelling tradition that depends on something other than word play or what mythical worlds can escape the ethereal plane. How do the post-genocide avoid sounding dispossessed and nihilistic?

In the space between life and death that natives often exist in, between dawn and darkness, how can shadows appear without the arrival of sunlight? Zerzan goes on to analyze a quote from the same prominent native writer. *Postindian consciousness is a rush of shadows in the distance, and the trace of natural reason to a bench of stones; the human silence of shadows over presence. The shadow is that sense of intransitive motion to the referent; the silence in memories. Shadows are neither absence of entites nor the burden of conceptual references. The shadows are the motions that mean silence, but not the presence or absence of entities. The sounds of words, not the criteria of shadows and natural reason, are limited in human consciousness and the distance of discourse.*

Zerzan's response:

Which Parisian postmodernist wrote the above, you may ask? None other than Anishinaabe Gerald Vizenor, whose frequent references to post-structuralist/postmodern theorists such as Derrida and Roland Barthes, along with such unreadable passages as the one quoted above, help to identify him as a writer who is uninterested in the clear prose of Native stories. In fact, for him, according to Robert Berner, "traditional tribal narratives are only the inevitably tragic remnants of dying cultures.

Native people, since the earliest encounters with other cultures, have always adopted new tools if they served a purpose, practical or otherwise. In the modern context, French theory is no exception. In the same way that indigenous warriors would use Spanish horses and lances against intruders, native writers reinterpret western philosophical concepts and literary forms from phenomenology, to (coming of age) Bildungsroman, and indigenous futurisms. Tribal storytelling may often use simple language, but the meaning of the trickster archetype is far from immediately intelligible. It could also be argued that the indigenous influence on postmodernism is far more germane here than the specter of a poststructural abandonment of traditions. An abhorrence towards metanarratives is another way to say that hundreds of oral traditions, in different languages and settings, are preferable to the Latin "one true church". The imaginative failure of Primitivism is related to the distinction between anarchy and Anarchism. The point is not to adopt the mostly passe assumptions of postmodernism, but to embrace ambiguity and playfulness as inherently valuable. Maybe he flirts with death and destruction, but the Coyote also desires sensuality and indulgence.

Black Seed has tried to distinguish itself from other anti-civilization projects by emphasizing a strong critique of anthropology and humanism. This clear distancing from primitivist ideology as personified by Zerzan, takes place against the backdrop of years' long conversations in the green anarchist milieu about the limitations of using an anthropological lens as the primary way to understand people. Khaki-clad explorers, who collect dreams and songs to be cataloged with the same zeal as entomologists who pin butterflies under glass displays, should seem absurd to those of us endeared to the natural world. Modern Native Americans continue to be the most vocal about distrust for anthropologists; even in the age of rigorous ethics review boards, sacred objects and ancestral remains line the shelves of university vaults.

This ideology probably should have been retired to the archive a long time ago but, a decaying Mayan calendar is right every millennia or so. The rise of agriculture, like any other subject, is worth looking at as to how it might relate to the formation of social hierarchies. It could be argued that classifying societies according to their food production methods is just another iteration of historical materialism, but if we think of bricolage instead of engineering, that sin can be forgiven. Every weapon should remain available to us. Anthropology has an intensely racist past and is embedded in a profit-driven university apparatus that hasn't moved far beyond the failings of scientific positivism. Still, there are some expressions from within this discipline that are worthy of attention from anarchists. Something left out of the story is that many of the strongest criticisms of anthropology emerged from within the field itself. The 1960s generation of New Anthropology was birthed at a time when radicals were beginning to interrogate even the sacred assumptions of classical Marxism; questioning anthropology as science was a necessary conclusion. Theorists at the time turned to the ideas of Heidegger, Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and an assemblage of "unreadable" texts by Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan to deconstruct and re-en-vision the discipline.

The go-to ethnographer for the more rebellion-inclined is Pierre Clastres, who views tribal people as Nietzschean warriors always ready to throw poison darts into the throats of would-be rulers. This is appealing compared to primitivist claims that hunter-gatherers were mostly conflict-free proto-liberals. I also, at times, identify with Chimpanzees more than Bonobos, but anthropomorphism yields different results than learning a new dance by watching elk play.

Instead of looking at nonwestern societies with the goal of learning about other cultures, anthropology can be used to find something out about ourselves. Writer Michael Taussig does this better than almost anyone. People on the edge of the industrial mono-world can show us how irrational and destructive this civilization really is. Anthropology can be an implement to understand mass society. "The Magic of the State" in particular, provides an example of how ethnology and history can be used without falling into the trap of believing that we can understand the development of a nation or a people objectively. More surrealism than empirical historiography, the essay tells the story of a fictionalized Latin American country. Examining the mythical facets that produce conquistadors, indians, and slaves might be more fruitful for comprehending colonialism than obsessing over exact dates and verifiable artifacts. The problem with Primitivism is not necessarily that it draws inspiration from the Other, but its fixation on knowing the final truth about what living in this world means. Those who use "postmodern" as an epithet come off as being fearful of the chaotic and irrational side of wilderness. It's good that there are questions that might never be fully answered. The world, disenchanted or not, can still be met with wonderment as well as terror.

Unlike the vetted anthropologists and philosophers mentioned above, anarchists when telling stories to an anarchist audience about other life- ways, can say something different. In many ways, the writing from our sphere might seem like a poor imitation of what comes out of university humanities or social science departments (at its worse it certainly is), but, for what we lose in resources and prestige we gain a smaller and more accessible dialogue. How anarchists might use the knowledge of specialists and how to disagree in a way that steers clear of resentful polemics are questions guiding this provocation. Primitivism's relationship to anthropology and the lived experience of Native Americans should be countered with our own speculations.

Nihilism and postmodernism are not flags to wave or some self-applied identity, but sets of interpretations that help explain our present situation. In place of an all-encompassing theory composed of the hidden platonic forms that shape Primitivism, we can create a cosmology of direct experience. Zerzan continues to represent the worst aspects of both Christianity and scientism. The great Leviathan, that impulse that drags free creatures into enslavement, has been usurped by the Behemoth, a monster so massive and indifferent to our existence that it is almost impossible to comprehend. Ethnology is just as needed as science fiction for finding inspiration for other ways to live. We will always come up with new stories, as well as retell many from the past, as long as we have desires that are still in motion.

Ages ago, a certain South African bushman, Hochigan, hated animals, which at the time were endowed with speech. One day he disappeared, stealing their special gift. From then on, animals have never spoken again.

Descartes tells us that monkeys could speak if they wished to, but they prefer to keep silent so they won't be made to work. In 1907, The Argentine writer Lugones published a story about a chimpanzee who was taught how to speak and died under the strain of the effort.

Jorge Luis Borges

From *Book of Imaginary Beings*

Post-Indian Aphorisms by Dominique Ganawaabi

1. Although colonization has often meant violence and tragedy, it is now mostly characterized by a grotesque boredom. The expansion into the new world *terra nullius* (empty space) meant that native peoples were only valuable as an absence. We reserve the right to remain ever-vanishing.

Asking that the inheritors of genocide stay optimistic is in poor taste.

2. Indigeneity is presently shaped by the external management of memory and forgetting. First contact, smallpox, Wounded Knee, and residential schools are the least important parts of our history. Although we are cold and hungry, our suffering is small compared to yours.

3. A tribe is more than an individual, but something other than a subculture, political ideology, or nation state. Criminal gangs, maternal orders, or secret societies are closer to the mark. Indigenous ancestry does not flow from the blood (as it moves through our veins or remains in the soil) but from our mucus, phlegm, and bile.

4. Mixedbloods will be buried as deep as their white blood. Fullbloods will levitate in a sacred dance at the treelines...

Anthropologists will be buried upside down with their toes exposed like mushrooms.

5. To speak very broadly, white people have been afraid of the unknown, while indigenous peoples have learned to fear the observable. Indians have tended to disappear, and the nazarenes seem to over-emphasize the value of merely existing. Setting each other (or ourselves) on fire to stay warm is starting to grow a little old.

6. Thus far there has been much talk about sperm quantum, but not enough about the aura and reflective qualities of native ovum and semen. Those of us who still exist may feel some hesitation about multiplying the banal experience of social life.

A female sexual organ filled with several male private parts is emptied, its contents spread across the grass.

7. If colonists imported the idea of salvation, it is also true that they brought with them the concept of sodomy. Amaranth, cocoa, and sugar maple each represent—the venial, the mortal, and the sins that cry to heaven.

Monotheism and Enlightenment values are invasive species.

The European God has been dead for seven generations but he still appears in the blurry paranormal photographs of hunters. Ghost signals represent more than the pareidolia of finding patterns where none exist.

The entity of North America is a vast haunted burial ground.

9. Shamans who sell ceremonial knowledge in economic or social markets are unforgivable, but the ones who peddle ridicule and make people pay for it are sacred.

All forms of creativity, such as magic rites and rituals, make the unseen visible. There is something to learning to sit with the anxious feeling, recognizing its blurred edges, while being ready to obscure the light that wants to get out.

10. Antiblackness (social death) is the scar left from being torn from humanist illumination. Indigeneity is the wound created by being forced under its shadow. Black people are not reducible to bodies. Flesh is never just flesh. The indigenous are not equivalent to the land. Nothing can be heard in this silent field.

11. Because genocide is more than just negation, decolonization cannot be completed until Christian Europe has been conquered and recreated in an indigenous image. This can not happen soon enough. If you asked the average climate scientist, in just the right way, they would probably agree.

12. White women held in Indian captivity was the earliest form of American Literature. With some luck it could also be the last.

13. Cultural appropriation should be immediately implemented by the non-indigenous. Start with headdresses and dream catchers, but follow through by instituting traditional kinship systems and gender roles that can count past two. The realization of Full Animism is the most advanced stage of socialism.

14. Rather than attempt to live among or “work with” wild indians, allies should concern themselves with awkward attempts at rewilding: consider holding a mouthful of warm water while scaling a resistant hill.

15. Decolonized eugenics will be used to spread bronze skin and high cheekbones. Syphilis will do the rest.

16. The burning of Notre Dame cathedral is not a sign of civilization’s decline but of its remaining strength.

17. The term Two-Spirit emerged from the academy via ethnology. It is oriented more towards Hegelian ideals than to the miasma of native gender expressions. Living trans and queer lifeways does not require the legitimization of a historical precedent.

18. Postindian identity resonates beyond the auditory traditions. We exist as texts, bibliography, and index. Perhaps most importantly, we inhabit words that are impossible to speak except in whispers or piercing shouts.

We might have more in common with glimmering silken webs than with the stone reliefs of Olmec statues.

19. Experts have claimed that the savages make no proper distinction between cultural and religious categories. A new term might be created for the process of coerced atheism. Some of us still play dead or peer out when we should be sleeping.

We expect that if nightmares can come true, than dreams are just as real.

20. Rationality tells us that this world is probably slipping away, we aren’t exactly reveling in that prospect but even if it’s too late for traditional knowledge to reverse it all, we feel that impermanence is not a curse.

After a few mournful howls or wimpers we can turn and trot away.

The Anpoa Duta Collective: Part 1

Interview with Aragorn!

This collective was interviewed for *The Fight for Turtle Island*. Here we are able to include more of the wide-ranging conversation with them.

ADC2: When we started this we were living in the city but we were also doing a lot of base-building, organizing work in Dakota communities. Part of it was around treaty rights stuff, some of it was around land access, sacred sites, just a lot of different work.

A!: The weird thing about native stuff, right, is like, as soon as you touch a native thing, people assume that you know everything about all the 500 nations.

ADC: Right. Right!

A!: So, where does the Sioux, how far east do the Sioux go?

ADC1: That depends on who you ask and in what era. The broadest traditional territorial borders that I've heard of, traditional meaning prior to contact, were as far east as Michigan, as far south as Missouri, as far west as Montana, and as far north as Manitoba. The great Sioux nation was one of the largest political bodies that existed prior to contact.

ADC2: Part of that too is that different people, historians, linguists, look at different markers for how to define territory, which is a mobile thing. It fluxed, it changed. So in Michigan there're places that have Dakota names, there's a Mendota, Michigan; I think there's another place that's a Vedonteh[?], which for us is a really significant concept—it's where two rivers meet. So you see some of these references in Michigan. So that would have extended, that would have fluxed, so for example, basically there'd be relatives in North Carolina. So if you look over, there's people who speak a language that is mutually intelligible. If they spoke to us we would understand them, and if we spoke to them they would understand us.

ADC1: Their story is that, not much before contact...

ADC2: Yea, it was in the 1700s when they were going on a trading expedition, they were going out east, and basically doing this large loop from Minnesota out to a lot of the Great Lakes, over to like, New York, essentially. And then they were going to go down the coast and back up, and that's just the trading route that they were on... It doesn't even seem like they were exploring, that was just their trading route. They were exchanging things, exchanging ideas and information, and they ended up being in North Carolina when settlers were arriving and getting established and basically got stuck there. So there's this community of Dakota people.

It gives you an idea of how far not just territory but influence spread. There's this talk in places in Mexico that down there they have catlinite [?] or pipestone, which is one of our sacred stones up here. We have records up here of people having stuff from them that would've been traded up and down the Mississippi...

ADC1: like chocolate...

ADC2: ...Yea. So it's really difficult to quantify what the territory would've been.

A!: So I'm sure of the large, dozen or so groups that are scattered throughout the u.s. many peoples are subgroups or related groups...

ADC2: Right

A!: ... so, Anishanaabe are mostly down the St Lawrence river through Wisconsin,

ADC2: Through the great lakes A!: Through the great lakes, even to northern Minnesota, but are not necessarily known in oral records as being huge travelers, like the Odawa are known for moving around and pushing furs on French people or whatever but not necessarily for going to South Carolina. ADC2: Right.

A!: But of course to have a set of stories or an understanding of what the world was like pre-contact for me becomes a really dangerous conversation because it basically is owned by anthropologists.

ADC2: It is. So, we reference a lot of oral stories that we hear from people, so one story that we've heard elders tell is their first contact with white people, which actually occurred, in the story, on the shores of Lake Superior.

ADC1: Actually it's not specified. It could be Hudson Bay. They're not sure.

ADC2: It could be Hudson Bay, but how they reference the body of water is how Lake Superior is referenced today. We think it's Lake Superior, but it could have easily been Hudson Bay...

ADC1: I think it might have been Hudson Bay...

ADC2 :... there are some... just going back to [baby interrupts] we also reference oral traditions from other people, so Hauten Oshone [?] have a dance that they say they got from Dakota people, so... there's a historic... like, there would have been an alliance between us and them that extended up until 18...

ADC1: ...up til the war of 1812. ADC2: Yea. which Dakota people fought in, and so... For us it's this really fascinating idea, trying to look at what that might have looked like, or how these alliances worked in the past, which gives us an idea of how they could work today, right? But yea, so anyway, there's that reference, but there's also a story, it's one of the creation stories, so... like I mentioned there's seven bands, there's seven fires of the [ochenti shakoiem SP!?!]. So, one of them references Podoteh [sp?] as like this site of creation for one of the ochetis, or one of the fires, so for them it's the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. That's referenced in a number of different ways as basically the center. So, when we talk about where that traditional territory would've extended, right now a lot of people, like the furthest east that Dakota people live contemporarily, like within traditional reservation communities, I think Prairie Island is the furthest east, at this point, and it's on the border of Minnesota and Wisconsin on the Mississippi river. And then you have people as far west as Montana.

A!: Right, it's huge.

ADC2: So if you look at where the center is, then you have to go further east.

ADC1: Food's ready.

ADC2: So that's just one idea of where like, but like Minnesota Mico- che [?] is identified as the homeland, that's how the homeland is defined for the Dakota, who are, you know more the woodland style, traditionally. A lot of people, when they think of Sioux they think Lakota, which has a very plains culture and style, but for us, some of our ceremonies would have been closer to the ceremonies of Anishanaabe than they would be to the Lakota. So like we have the Wakanachipi [?], we had permanent settlements that we lived in, participating in different, like sugaring camps, berrying camps, so that kind of gives you a framework.

A!: Yea, most of that's new information for me. I mostly thought it was all plains.

ADC2: Yea, the eastern part gets over-shadowed, and I think a lot of it goes back to, out of the whole Sioux nation, we were the first ones to come in contact, we were the first ones to fight.

A lot of people break up history by war, in different ways, so there's a US/Dakota war, 1862, and then there's Red Cloud's war, and these other wars. But for us it's one long war. There's accounts of that starting even earlier, like in 1858, that there were some people who declared war then. And for us, there's one man...

ADC1: one of our personal heroes,

ADC2: yea, he's been vilified throughout history. Inquidutah [?] is his name, and he's vilified because he's seen as this person who committed a massacre of white people in the 50s. He participated in the war of 1862, and he was already an old man at that point, he was probably in his 50s, right? And there's records of him participating in just about every battle from 1862...

ADC1: ...from 1858...

ADC2: well, 1858 was I guess the first attacks, he conducted a lot of raids against traders and when the war of 1862 broke out he was actually part of those wars, and when the US forces drove people into South Dakota, he was part of those battles. And he continued fighting all the way through, he was in some of the last battles like...

ADC1: Battle of Little Big Horn... ADC2: Actually one of his sons is thought to be the one who killed Custer, because he was the one who got Custer's horse, and traditionally if you killed someone you got his horse. So that is a point of pride, that was...

A!: I imagine it is a point of pride! (laughter)

ADC2: . that was a Dakota man. So he was living among the Lakota. So what's interesting is, in american history, at the time of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, these guys were like vilified, right? They were later either captured or killed, they were either imprisoned or they were executed. So then they become these safe heroes, because they were conquered. So now we can celebrate their prowess. But Inquidutah was never captured. He died an old man...

ADC1: ... a free man...

ADC2: . in his sleep. He was up in Canada, and he died in his 90s, an old man, having lived a life full of battles. He was never conquered, and became and stayed a vilified figure. So like I said, when we started that paper with a group of people, we kind of put it up almost like throwing our colors up, like "this is who we are," and trying to find other people in Dakota communities who were in the same place. And like I said it was a CrimethInc-style project... we didn't want to put our family names on it, we didn't want to put our personal or traditional names on it, we just wanted to put this out there and see who responded. Partly because there's people who agree with each other but have family beef with each other or there's community beef, or whether you're traditional or not, or whatever it is, so we were essentially like "f all that" let's throw up our colors and see who rallies, right?

A!: Have you succeeded? Do you have some peers?

ADC2: Yea, I feel like as a result of that ...

ADC1:... it took a little while and it didn't happen in the moment. It had consequences as something that had happened in the past. I hear people referencing it. But I didn't hear it at the time. And of course when you're trying to compose something and you're trying to get submissions for something like a paper, and of course nobody writes, and you're hounding after people, then eventually it's just not worth it anymore. and we moved on.

ADC2: Well, it was just a small group of us and we were trying to pass it on to other people. We wanted it to be more than just a handful of people doing most of the work, so we put it out there so it's not just a handful of us bottomlining it. And it just didn't happen. And we realized that it did what it needed to do. Like, we found each other...

A!: How many issues did you do? ADC: Six.

A!: I've never seen it.

ADC2: Oh, I'll give you some copies. There's some copies that we don't have anymore... I mean, they disappeared off the shelves. People grabbed it, people read it. Even people who didn't like it, they read it, they responded to it. There's some narratives, or maybe, lack of a better term, there's some "discourse" that we put out there... I think, I don't know, it's hard to quantify...

ADC1: Yea...

ADC2: There were times when we were capturing things that were already happening 14.51 we just put a voice to it, and there's also times when we started conversations.

ADC1: Like a really great example involving Inquidutah: so we were destroying at... I can't even remember what event it was, but a man came up afterwards and he shook both of our hands, and he said "thank you," and we said "for what?" and he said "Inquidutah was my grandfather. This is the first time anybody has ever written anything good about him."

A!: Wow.

ADC1: Yea. And I was like, I knew who this man was, I had known him throughout my life, but I never knew that his grandfather was Inquidutah. So that was very interesting, and it has started a conversation about heroes, who our heroes are, and who are the people we want to emulate, and why...

ADC2: and why we celebrate or don't celebrate them. Why do we celebrate... why does everyone reference...

ADC1: 'Cause someone got mad at us for that article.

ADC2: Yea.

ADC1: .like, "he was not a nice person."

ADC2: ...and it's fine. That's also something to say. Like, there's things that he might have done that we don't agree with now, but... and there was an interesting conversation that came up... I mean there were lots of interesting conversations...

I feel like there were just certain things that we were tapping in to, things that were happening, conversations that were happening, that we just allowed people to put on to paper.

A!: I'm going to change the topic.

ADC1: Mm hmm.

ADC2: Yea.

A!: You're sober.

ADC: Yea.

A!: That's unusual.

ADC1: Yes.

A!: So for you it comes from CrimethInc background...

ADC1: I mean, all said and done, I don't... unlike many people specifically from this community I don't have a super intense family history of alcoholism, in that, by the time that I was born, it had all been sorted out. So my family had all gone through AA and everything, but you still have the historical trauma factor of alcoholism having run in the family and the different ways people had coped with that over the course of years. For me... There's always the personal component—I don't like the idea of not being in control of myself and so therefore I don't like the kinds of things that put me out of control of myself, especially in public situations.

But the thing we talk a lot with our kids about is substances being used as a tool of colonial oppression: that it's been given to us specifically for the purpose of making us stupid. And it is through the influence of these substances that we have in some cases signed away huge tracts of land...

A!: is there an example you use when you make that argument?

ADC1: Sure. A great one (laughs) is the first treaty known to have been signed between the Dakota people and the United States government, the treaty of 1805. And part of... I mean there's a lot of really weird, interesting things about that treaty. The guy who was in charge of getting it signed was actually an official representative of the US government. All kinds of weird stuff was part of that. But one of the bribes that was handed over to get—only two—community leaders from a confederation of seven different nations, was four kegs of whiskey. So, these things being used as bribes, as tools, to get us to concede to things that we would normally never do...

ADC2: It's also interesting, the way of politics around sobriety. It's very different I think from anarchist circles. In anarchist circles, sobriety is, in a very real sense, about whether you drink alcohol or don't drink alcohol, like with straight edge: it's very clear cut. Out here, there's people who will have a glass of wine, who will have the occasional alcohol, but they don't drink, they don't party. That's the line we try to support, 'cause I feel like it's where a lot of people are at out here, too, this idea of not getting drunk, not being under the influence.

ADC1: [baby sounds] Education, regardless of what you're abstaining from, is not historically that successful.

ADC2: right. Also it's a much more political idea. So when we translate it into Dakota, when we talk about it, it's abadezah [?], that's the word. And all that really means is to be clear headed, to have a clear mind. So we use that with our kids, in a number of ways, not just around drinking alcohol... like if you're drinking alcohol and partying you're not of clear mind. But it's also when your head's filled with propaganda, when you're doing things and you don't know why you're doing them.

A!: I believe ideology is a word for that.

ADC2: Right. exactly, that's exactly it. So that's to give an example of why I was talking about our program, it's what we try to do, it's like stepping stones, or building blocks... and the idea of abadeza[?] which a lot of our kids can easily understand to refer to not getting drunk, not getting trashed. it's an easy connection.

Then when we talk about dancing for the American flag at powwow... When we ask why they do that and they don't know how to answer us, that's another time we talk about abadez[?] "you're not understanding why you're doing something, or, when you sing a flag song, what you're actually singing about." So there's a number of examples we use to break that down, and part of it goes along with language. Like, a lot of people talk about learning the language as a decolonizing act, and language as a radical act. And in and of itself, I don't think it is. You can learn the language and still support the US government.

ADC1: A really great example of this actually is from when my mother first came back here and was trying to do language work in the community. What's common in native communities, especially in language or vitalization projects, especially in urban or academic areas, where there's this total idolization of elders. Elders and fluent speakers are like, you know, the bees' knees! So she comes back and she's trying to do language work out here, and she's working with this one elder who is trying as hard as she can to get her own grandkids kicked off of the rolls because of per cap money. Per cap money was just becoming a thing at that point, and she's like

“well, they’re not really Dakota, so they shouldn’t be...” and you know, of course, this is in the language, right?

So she’s having this conversation in the language, and then proceeds to talk about the founding of the church at Upper Sioux, and how the people who are coming in right now are not from the original church founders... It was this incredibly colonized, christian, money-centered thing. So you can have all these conversations in the language and it doesn’t change them. ADC2: Another example is from one of the last issues we did of our paper. There was a project where people were translating the star-spangled banner into Dakota. As you can imagine there were some people who had a very “why the hell would you do this” reaction, and there were other people who were very supportive. So we really wanted to give voice to the people who were critical of the project. Of all the things to translate, why that? Really breaking it down, critical consciousness, and really having a clear mind and asking “why are we doing this.” There were a number of submissions in response to our callout, and one of them was really, really powerful. It was around a drum group, where there were a number of people talking. And they’re asked to sing a song to honor veterans. So they chose what is essentially a flag song, a song for the united states. so it’s not actually a veterans’ song, it’s a song for the US...

A!: It’s a nationalist song.

ADC2: and not a good nationalist, but an imperialist nationalist. And one person refused to sing it. They were like, “well, why won’t you sing it?” and he says, “well, do you know what the song says?” and the kid repeats all the words, and they’re in Dakota, so he says all the words. and he says, “so what does that mean?” and the kid says, “it’s honoring veterans.” and the guy says “no.” and he translated line for line, “what you’re singing is ‘may the flag of the president fly forever over our homelands.’ that’s what you’re singing when you sing that song. and if you don’t know the language you don’t know what you’re saying.” So it was this powerful moment where you could see why learning the language can be this moment, but only if it’s... so for us it’s this very Fanonian concept. Revitalizing culture, revitalizing language, but if it’s not done within a certain context, it becomes empty, hollow... It’s through struggle, through that kind of critical perspective that it has more meaning but also creates meaning. The stories change, they adapt to your current situation.

A!: I have to admit that for me, Oda- wa, which is usually seen as a subset language of Chippewa, or Ojibway... I mean, there are may be a hundred Ojibway speakers left?

ADC1: More in this state, I think, I think there’s about 500.

A!: Maybe. But we’re talking that hundreds would be the total number left. And if we talk about Dakota broadly... my guess would be thousands, but low thousands.

ADC1: Other way around. There’s five speakers in the state of Minnesota.

ADC2: Five native speakers who are fluent.

A!: That really surprises me.

ADC1: Yep.

ADC2: For Lakota, in South Dakota, and is a different language,

ADC1: different dialect ADC2: Yea, there’s probably closer to about 1000. There’ve been actual surveys. For Dakota, especially in Minnesota, where we are, there’s very... at one point there were ten... ADC1: there’s more in Canada. there’s maybe maybe 150 speakers in Canada.

ADC2: Fluent speakers? Oh I don’t think there’s that many.

A!: And then you compare all this to Dine (Navajo) and they’re huge... ADC2: They still have a first language.

A!: Exactly. So, obviously, talking to Klee, the frame of reference is just so tremendously different.

ADC1: I was at a language conference in South Dakota, last minute, invited to speak on this panel of people who were studying language. I was talking just about language programs and whatever, and finally this one elder asked a question, he says “do you think our language will be able to continue?” “yes...” So I was the last in line, and everyone else gives these super upbeat answers, like “absolutely! if we put our nose to the grinder, we’re totally going to be able to do this, this is an important part of our identity, we’ll be able to pull it together.” So finally it comes to me at the end, and I was like “no, actually. I don’t. I hate to be the downer on this one but one of the primary issues with this is that Dakota as a language, Dakota has an ideology does not make any sense, within a capitalist, colonial framework. So if you’re going to beholden to the US government, if you’re going to be loyal to the capitalist system, if your dream is to continue to wear blue jeans and drive trucks, Dakota isn’t relevant. It’s not relevant to the world that we’ve created under these circumstances. Because an ethnified people with their own language doesn’t make any sense. It doesn’t make sense to speak Dakota to maintain some rudiments of culture. It won’t work.”

ADC2: You only need to look at the last 100 years to see...

ADC1: ...to see proof of that...

ADC2: Yea. The language has been rapidly and dramatically declining. In combination with assimilation into culture.

A!: But this is a strange phenomenon. At least in the Navajo context, it seems like every other generation recommits to either the language, or no language.

ADC2: Yea.

ADC1: Yes.

ADC2: I think the biggest difference with the Navajo is you have... with the Dine you have a very specific context with a very large land base and a large population, and also relative isolation from outside culture. I think that ...

A!: absolutely.

ADC2: that’s changing with technology, as people have more ready access to the internet. And there’s different ways that people are going to react to that, it’s not going to be a black or white thing, but... yea, I think that isolation’s been a protective factor for them vs here, and where there’re checkerboard reservations, or small reservations, change happens much more quickly.

A!: Yea.

ADC2: That’s like ... there’re linguists who spend their whole lives studying this.

A!: I’m going to change topics. ADC2: By the way this is wild rice with some venison and some other stuff in it, so... if you want more we have plenty.

A!: Thank you. So the thing that is really interesting to me. There’s this project I’ve really been wanting to do for a while is to sit down with people who’ve left anarchism, left radical politics...

ADC2: Nice. Awesome.

A!: ...left counter culture. Sit down with them and ask them...

ADC1: why...

A!: Why’d you go?

ADC1: [laughter]

ADC2: Fascinating project.

A!: So... at some point that’ll happen. As it turns out, that’s this conversation too!

ADC1: Absolutely.

A!: So far in this set of interviews— this is the third—and all three of you are done with anarchism. I mean, I haven't heard that come out of your mouth yet, but you've been checked out. You haven't been a public person or figure in that space in years. So that's really interesting to me that in all three cases... Gord Hill (Zigzag), Lyn Highway (do you know her?—she was part of the Coast Sal-ish insurrectionary anarchists...) but more or less their work is elsewhere. ADC2: Elsewhere, yea. Interesting. The public persona thing is interesting: I never really wanted to be a public persona.

A!: That's the problem with being a political prisoner, right. You don't get a choice in the matter.

ADC1: In all fairness, you may not see yourself as that, but I totally thought I was dating some mobster the first several times we went out because everyone knew him. And not just like, local people in Minneapolis, but like, we'd go to Wisconsin, or to Winona, or wherever and people would recognize him. You were a public figure in that people knew who you were

ADC2: . but not as in have a public persona that I promoted or...

ADC1: That's true, but you were a very well-known person active in a given community [talked over]... ADC2: But the difference... and some of that was very intentional. I try to do this wherever I go, but I was developing relationships and connections to people. A lot of that, like in Minneapolis, growing up there and having a very wide and diverse social network, and as a result of that...

A!: You were born and raised in Minneapolis?

ADC2: Yea. Part of it was trying to make connections. For me it's always been like, like part of a big family, trying to figure out how do all these pieces fit together, all these relationships, trying to figure out what's our connection. So you end up realizing how small this world really is, right? Like, it's really funny, like your dad... We actually met your dad.

ADC1: Yea.

ADC2: I forgot to mention this to you but we ran into him around Bulgaria A!: I'm so embarrassed.

ADC: Don't be embarrassed.

A!: So you passed through punk and punk-influenced anarchism.

ADC2: Yea.

A!: ... which is not necessarily the CrimethInc thing. How did that happen?

ADC2: I don't know how it happened. A!: You mentioned that town, Winona.

ADC2: Yea.

A!: There was a scene there?

ADC2: There was, yea. I'm trying to think. Part of it was having a real dedication to being in Minnesota.

[The Anarchist Library editor: poem included on same page at the end of the interview]

The Beauty of Things

To feel and speak the astonishing beauty of things-
earth, stone and water,

Beast, man and woman, sun, moon and stars-

The blood-shot beauty of human nature, its thoughts, freanzies and passions,

And unhuman nature its towering reality- For man's half dream; man, you might say, is nature dreaming, but rock And water and sky are constant-to feel Greatly, and understand greatly, and express greatly, the natural

Beauty, is the sole business of poetry.

The rest's diversion: those holy or noble sentiments, the intricate ideas,

The love, lust, longing: reasons, but not the reason.

Robinson Jeffers

My Mind Below this Beautiful Country: Part 2

Interview: Goat

Talsetan Brothers Share their stories of Land Defense and Indigenizing

This is the second half of the conversation between, Ishkadi and Lo'oks, the Tahltan brothers. The first half was published in Black Seed #5.

This conversation was recorded in the recently constructed Healing Center at the Unist'ot'en Camp. For the past 8 years, the Unist'ot'en clan of the Wet'suwet'en Nation have been occupying their traditional territory and preventing government and industry from entering the land to build pipelines that would transport tar sands and fracked gas to the global market. The Unist'ot'en Camp has served as a site of inspiration where land defenders from disparate regions can meet, network, plan, learn from the Unist'ot'en strategy, seek wisdom, and heal.

Days at camp are spent tending the infrastructure of the site, being with the river that has been protected as a result of the imagination and responsibilities assumed by the Unist'ot'en, conversing, cooking, and laughing. Nights are spent beneath the stars, huddled around a fire with fellow comrades, sharing stories, planning, and laughing. While I was at the camp this winter I met Ishkadi and Lo'oks, Taisetan Brothers who are regular occupiers and visitors of Unist'ot'en, and whose territory is 4 hours drive north from there. They had stopped over at camp en route to their land. One night as some of us were drinking tea and eating snacks, they began to share stories about their home, their language, and their work defending their territories from industry. Several of us stayed up late into the night with the brothers, riveted by their stories and their particular cadence as a duo. What is printed below comes largely from what they shared that night. This conversation was made possible in part by the unique space created by the Unist'ot'en where indigenous and settler radicals can encounter each other and share their stories.

Ishkadi grew up colonized on Iskut Indian Reservation No. 6, in so-called Northwestern British Columbia, in Tahltan territory. He has been involved in direct action and blockades in defense of his people's territory for over 10 years. He is pursuing the reclamation of his indigenous identity.

Lo'oks was born in a hospital outside of Tahltan territory. He grew up pursuing guidance and wisdom from his elders, especially his grandma and grandpa. In his spare time he is crafting a diabolical scheme to dominate the world. He calls it "World Peace." Ishkadi and Lo'oks are brothers and they are the two youngest speakers of Tahltan in the world, of which there are currently less than 30 speakers.

Ishkadi—Our culture is deeply enriched with community support, it's all communal. Our people did everything with each other. Nowadays, it's different because of that colonial question, that hole, that dark cloud above us. Cause when they put us in reservations, when they took individual kids to residential schools, when they forced kids to go to day school, they were attacking

those kids individually. But when they took individuals to the reservation, they colonized a whole community. The after affects of that are many different things. And on top of that, they slapped on a system that would suit the colonial interest. So instead of having our traditional governing structures, they abolished that. They made it illegal to do it that way. Suddenly the potlatch and the sundances were illegal to do, and those were really influential for spiritual purposes, social organizing, name giving and so many things that went along with that. Then when that happened, they took the Indians in the reservations, then they put a voting system in to elect a chief in council. The chief used to be appointed to that position through their merits, through their good will, of how well they treated people, how they did good for the whole nation, not just themselves. They've enacted a completely different kind of leader and put the word "chief" on it, and that's the band chief, band council. And they just have jurisdiction on the reservation, it's pretty much all they have. So now we've got that form of colonizers. You can't really call them colonizers; they're just dealing with the colonial situation.

Lo'oks—We never had our cultural teaching from our parents. I mean we had remnants of it, but never had a full grasp of it, so our grandparents were the ones that would teach us. And that's a huge generational gap, we're the grandchildren and we're learning from our grandparents. There was a gap in our traditions through our parents, we did learn from our grandparents but it was kind of hard because there was a generational gap. There were certain points that took a while to take in, certain teachings, certain questions we would ask our grandparents that would never come up because we were using our English, we would think it would help but it didn't. And our uncle who was living with our grandparents at the time, who spent most of his time with our grandparents, he's their son, and he would fill in those gaps, along with our aunties and sometimes our mother as well.

Ishkadi—Me and my brother were learning Tahltan language together, our buddy Oscar was learning Tahl- tan by himself, and we hooked up, and the three of us started to discuss the language as a trio. Brother has been the one that learned it a lot earlier and a lot quicker, so he would be the one who would come to us, he already had the Tahltan mindset. And then Oscar would come in with his linguistic side, and I would come in with an anthropological, ethnographic vantage point, and we would decipher the language, the three of us. And what that did was help us to understand the way our ancestors think. Their worldview, everything they did, their whole language was land-based. There's a word that our grandpa told us that was a high Tahltan word, it's Es-di yige konelin.

Tatsetan/Tahltan: A Land Based Nomadic Language

Lo'oks—Well what that means is Konelin, means "nice place." You see a good landscape or a good lookout, a place that has a nice, natural scenery that you just like, you say Konelin, it's a nice place. And Es-di yige, is under, Di is in mind. We can all understand memories, I can say I remember this place or land, but the thinking of our people long ago, it's all embedded in our language with this is Es-di yige konelin, it's expressing that you're happy. When you come back to your home that you grew up in, you feel happy like you're back at home. You feel happy in your mind because you remember the landscape. When you're walking the land, you create a cognitive landscape, a cognitive map of the area. And when you leave somewhere else, that part

of the land stays with you in your mind. We would all say, “I remember this place,” but it’s a piece of landscape on this earth that’s embedded in our mind that will never leave us.

Ishkadi—The part that got us was Esdi, “my mind.” You picture the mind in western culture and psychology, they all have a different view of it, as something to dissect and everything. And this is the thing about English language, and the difference between English language and Tahltan language. English is a very separatist language, a double tongue language, and on the good side the English language could create things like poetry and really cool stuff that has double meanings. And on the bad side, the darker side, the evil side, they come up with stuff in business, and law, and the courts, where the English language could say one thing but mean numerous other things. I like to call it, the double-tongue language, because of that. But the Tahltan language, it’s more of a connection and more expressive. It’s a language of feeling, connection, and the whole concept of it is Es-di yige konelin translates to “My mind below this beautiful country.” It implies the cognitive landscape, the mind as part of the land. It’s the beautiful territory of the mind. The underneath, below it, it also insinuates that the sky is part of the mind. That connection is based in that one word, Es-di yige konelin, three words put together, one phrase. That is an example we use all the time of how Tahltan language connects us to the land. So to further that argument, if you mine the land, you are mining our minds. You’re ripping out the mountain within our minds. This is another form of why we do what we do, why we take part in actions, why we defend our territory. Because we’re not just defending it for the sake of defending it, there’s a holistic reason, a more spiritual reason. Our ancestors defended our territory, and it says that in the 1910 Tahltan declaration, that we defended with our blood. And in this day and age, industry or government, whatever it is, they come in, they do their work, and then they tell the Tahltan colonial council, “This is happening. Take this deal, the deal won’t get any better.” That’s a far cry from “we protect this with our blood”.

Lo’oks—Another example is “Going for skin.” Like when we say “I’m going,” you say Desal, like “I’m walking, going by walking.” And that’s the only means of transportation, going about with your two legs. So coming and going has to do with walking, and there’s different ways of using that word for walking, you say you’re coming and going. So when you say, “Ejidesal”, ejide means skin.

Ishkadi— Like hide.

Lo’oks—When our people were going hunting, they were providing food for their families, their communities and all that, but it’s the skin that has a huge importance in providing us clothing and keeping us warm in certain temperatures and also protects us from a lot of things. Clothing in actuality is very important for our survival, and our people’s everyday needs. From making clothes, backpacks to carry the food, moccasins. So skin was a huge thing that made the community function and do the things they could do for everyday life.

Ishkadi—Skin was even used for our, what they call huts. We lived in huts traditionally, no houses. Skin was part of what we used for tarp, tarpleen.

Lo’oks—When the early explorers and surveyors came into the territory and they brought in wall tents, they didn’t use canvas, they made wall tents out of skin. They had moose hide, like a wall tent made out of moose hide. So they adapted to many new things, but skin was a huge thing. Without skin it’s very hard to survive, it’s very hard to do all the things without skin. So when they go out hunting, it’s like when you say, “Ejidesal”, it’s “I’m going hunting.” But it literally translates to “I’m going for skin.” So going hunting, you’re going for skin but there’s also a bonus involved, you get food to feed your families.

Ishkadi—Yeah, and hunting insinuates a hit or miss. When Westerners trophy hunt, they go out and if they don't get nothin', they come back and, "Ah, I got skunked this time." But our grandparents and our elders knew where the migration routes were, so when they went out and there were no animals there, they would say, "Okay, they're not here. We must go to this other place where they would be this time of year." So they would walk there. The longest our grandpa told me that they were out of food was two months, and that was two months of going to different routes until they finally got a moose, I think it was a couple of moose. And when they say food they're just talking about big game, because for two months they had to be eating something. They were eating rabbits, squirrels, small animals that were around. That too is that whole relation with the land is with Ejidesal, they did not just go out for hit or miss or trophy hunting, they went out for survival. So they knew everything about the land. Our grandpa, or our uncle, we could ask, "Where is a good place for moose this time of year?" And he would tell us, "Walk up this river or this creek, you go up this mountain, right there, you'll see 'em." And you could see how our ancestors knew more than just where the animals would be. They would walk in a huge, vast territory that's many, many square kilometers. It wasn't just a couple of hectares, they were walking miles and miles. And they would learn what animals eat what, what kind of plants they would eat, what kind of other animals they would eat. And they knew all of that by their relationship with the land. So if they looked around and could see what kind of plants were in an area, they knew what kind of animals would be there. Or if all of a sudden there were plants that were plentiful in one area, they knew, okay, this certain animal is gonna be here, this year or next year. So it was a guarantee that they were going to get something back by their relationship with the land.

to'oks—We were doing more than just the language. We were going back to the land and doing everything our grandparents did before, which was going out on the land and being one with everything. Knowing everything about the land our grandparents walked on, and continuing with that.

Indigenizing, Land Defense, and Decolonization

Ishkadi—I think the last major part of our indigenizing was protecting the land. Prior to that we were still working, getting paid to "save our language." Since our decolonization route, we've started to do all this work that wasn't just separating from colonialism. We had to fill that hole, we had to fill that void with the ways that were taken from us. We had to pick up where we left off. We had to find out a different route, 'cause throughout our teenage years we wanted to be musicians, we wanted to make money with music and do our thing that way. But we never really had backing. It wasn't until our whole years of trying to regain, reclaim our identity then that became something else. Now we've got a foundation. Our next adventure in decolonization, as they call it, is to reclaim our territories, to reoccupy our land. 'Cause that has to be done. We're on our territories, unceded and unsundered. If we still live on a reservation and we don't flex that, that's not very strong until we get out there.

Lo'oks—I liked our area the way it was. In 2003 rumors came around that more development was coming in, more mines, and then those rumors became reality. I was surprised that no one was resisting, that there was absolutely no resistance. It wasn't until a couple years later, around 2005, that more of this stuff started happening, then our people started blockading. I

really enjoyed seeing that, I took part in it as much as I possibly could. I didn't want to see the land destroyed before I was able to go on it. And I didn't want to have areas on the land that I could not go to, and when it's already cleared out and I could go to it and it's not the same as it used to be. I liked the way it was, untouched and still able to roam around freely and not worry about any destruction happening to it. I liked our home the way it was already.

Ishkadi—Then this company was doing some test drilling around the territory looking for coal. And we heard about it, and at this time we were still working our jobs, “saving the language.” We were being paid to revitalize the language, and it was cool at first, that we were getting paid, but our actions would pretty much eliminate our jobs from there because of “political unrest.” But we were still employed under that, which was important too. We were told about these things happening up in the Klappan, and they told us to show up. So we went up once, and it was just people camping out. What they were doing was just drumming their songs and singing. The elders, the Tl'abane Keepers, went up to the company camp and said, “We're giving you guys an eviction notice, you have 24 hours to leave.” Singing their songs, playing their games, but the companies did not leave. They kept on going. “Oh that was cute,” the companies thought. “No big deal, sure you want us to leave but we're invested in this place.” They did that for about a month. And we just heard about it. Fortune Mineral was gonna utilize this road, but the Iskut Band maintained that road so they weren't allowed to use it. So our Uncle John actually came in and stopped them, blockaded them. Everyone told us, “Go help the Uncle!” And he was already there, getting wood for fire. One of our elders told us, “Go!” And he gave us a ride to the blockade. So we went, and by the time we got there, it was Uncle John and a few people there, and Uncle John already set Fortune Minerals out, sent them back. They had to fly their gear in. That was the catalyst for us. “Oh wow, we were a part of it while everything was happening.” The peak of it was our core people. The initial actions were ten years previous, everything was hunky dory for the time being. A couple days later I heard something was going to happen, but that was it. So eventually we went up to the Spencer Flat, Tokadi we called it, everyone else called it Sacred Head Waters. We went up there to the camp, and next thing you know we heard that there was a drill less than three kilometers from that camp. That really pissed everybody off, and that turned into “We're gonna occupy that drill, we're gonna stop them from working.” And we did. Tl'abane Keepers went there and stopped the drill. So the workers got sent back to the camp and that drill was in no use, it was still in the ground.

to'oks—We had a lot of the elders, and some of them came in and out to visit, some of them stayed there the whole time. There was a core group of us who were there the whole time, and then some other people who would come stay for a few days, go back out, and come back again. Some of the people would come visit, but go back. I can't really say off the top of my head. We also had settler support, which was a huge thing for us.

Ishkadi—And it was new.

Lo'oks—We had settler support previously, but it wasn't much, and they really couldn't do nothing because they came in with more of an environmental aspect of things, not so much an indigenous aspect of things. At the time, there was a separation between environmentalists and indigenous situations. This was when things started to change, when environmentalists started to realize that they had to work together with indigenous to protect the environment. So this was new for us when we finally had settler support that had a huge role with the whole thing.

Ishkadi—The settlers there, the non- indigenous folk, they were active bodies, but also they acted as media, so they helped us out in that way too. I mean it wasn't 100% that they were the

reason why it happened, but a large amount of it was due to them. So we took over that drill, and we took over another drill, then later on Fortune Mineral still wouldn't leave after we took over two of their drills. There was no active drilling happening for a time, and then eventually we blockaded their camp, their headquarters. Then the government called and said, "Get out, it's too confrontational." In this whole thing, it wasn't just the Tl'abanot'In people and the industry, Fortune Minerals. It wasn't just the industry versus the Indians, the First Nations people. The cops were there, they set up an RCMP detachment. And when we took over those drills, the cops were the first ones to come. And they confronted us, they said, "This is bad, what you're doing. We're impartial, we're here to keep the peace." But they were just enforcing the colonial rules. They were enforcing these permits that were bought on our territory: unceded, unsurrendered, Tl'abanot'In, Talsetan territory. Some of the workers in that camp were Tahltans. It was really funny because one of them was worried that we were gonna hurt them or whatever. They were pretty much a sellout. The other Tahltans were cool, they were like "Whatever." They left after that, but since then they never came back.

That point was big for us, because not only did we stand up for something, it gave us purpose to tell white people who came in and colonized our people, "No, you can't do it." It did something to us. It gave us a sense of purpose. And that was a final part of our indignization, our decolonization, uncolonizing. That was the part that made us want to live for something, gave us a purpose, gave us something else. We knew what we wanted. We knew what we had to do, it felt right. It's not going to school and making money off the system, and it's not going to the bootlegger and drinking our life away, snorting our life away. It's not that, it was something else. It's climbing a mountain. It's learning and understanding the language. Dissecting it, back and front, all around. It's looking for an animal and knowing where it's gonna go, and bringing that animal home and feeding your family. It's a bigger thing. And from that moment, I, myself, have gained so much. I could do that, I could tell the colonizers "No, you're not allowed on our territory." I also quit all that drinking, and all that crazy lifestyle, the drugs that I was involved in. I quit from that moment on, I've had a sober life since. And also, I did a lot of things from that moment because of the confidence that we built from that moment. And now our next adventure is to reclaim and occupy our territory. To move out there. All year, forever, ya know? Do something with it.

We Have Nothing To Say: Technology and the Economizing of Communication by Goat

How forget that? How talk

Distantly of 'The People'

Who are that force

Within the walls

Of cities

Wherein their cars

Echo like history

Down walled avenues

In which one cannot speak.

- from *Of Being Numerous* by George Oppen

We are tired of going untouched and unsatisfied, dragging ourselves through our pathetic lives that have no meaning, that grow more meaningless with each passing day. We sleepwalk from our bedrooms to our jobs, to restaurants and to dinner parties, and we know what will happen, which means we know that nothing will happen. This society, filled with so much money, so many straight lines, so many people, so much paperwork, so many machines, and so little verve, so little life, so little friendship, so little to discuss, so absent of touch, so absent of the sensuous, so absent of meaning, is revealing its own bankruptcy using the very scientific instruments it created to dominate the world with in the first place. Our wager is this: the dissatisfaction with the promises of the techno-capital utopia are spreading like a virus and this world cannot bear us becoming conscious of this fact.

But the virus spreads as doublethink. We want to clarify this dissatisfaction to clear the way towards destroying this world (or getting out of its way so it can destroy itself.) To accomplish this, we are enlisting Jean-Pierre Voyer's *An Inquiry into the Causes and Nature of the Poverty of People* and Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society*. We also refer to a contemporary text that seems to be heavily influenced by both of the aforementioned texts, Guillaume Paoli's *Demotivational Training*, as a reflection of how intimately enmeshed the market economy is with technology.

Voyer's inquiry demonstrates that the fundamental misery of modern life is the absence of communication, the misery common to all slaves of all ages. He demonstrates this by revealing how the exchange and flow of money become the actual living part of this world, while the humans in it behave as money and commodity mules, living always under the weight of money, and moving around the products that money buys. In the process, we cede all of what makes

us human, what makes us a peculiar species in the world, to the economy, and to money. What makes the human peculiar is that we talk and tell stories. But in this world the stock market, the economy, and our bosses always have the last word. We see Voyer as the bedrock of this essay because we agree with his simple expression of the most fundamental problem of this world. The essential question is this: why is it that we have nothing to say?

We want to spend the space of this essay revealing that Voyer's critique is so fundamental and essential because it is a critique of technological society, although he almost never mentions technology. We draw from another French thinker Ellul, to help us with the task. Ellul, writing at the same time as Voyer's mentors and collaborators, the situationists, said in *The Technological Society* that "it is useless to focus on capitalism" because technology is secretly the autonomous force running the world. There is a tremendous amount of complexity in the relationship between technology, capitalism, and money. This an attempt to lay these connections and their consequences bare.

Defining technology and technique to bring about their ruin

*Whenever we see the word technology or technique, we automatically think of machines.
This notion...is in fact an error*

The Technological Society

It was the textile machines that destroyed what was left of the independent agrarian way of life in rural England. It was an oil rigging machine and the greedy policies administered by dozens of office workers that caused the Deepwater Horizon mess and devastated the lives of creatures in the Gulf of Mexico. It was dams, canning factories, and modern fishing boats that drove salmon and the people who enjoyed a life together with them on the West Coast of North America to the brink of extinction. It was the atom bomb that scarred modernity with Hiroshima and the still present anxiety of thermonuclear war. And this doesn't account for the deep psychological and spiritual trauma for which technology is also responsible. Tinder, Marvel movies and fair trade coffee aren't worth the price to be paid for modern life. We must destroy the belief in the inevitability of technological progress.

To understand what is necessary to destroy a belief, we have to understand what it is we believe. Fortunately for the owners of this society, the common parlance usage of the word technology is a deception. The belief in the transcendent power of technology is deeply entrenched but naming it is especially elusive. Technology is usually used to describe things like gadgets, planes, satellites, and smartphones. Using Ellul as our guide, we will show that this definition excludes the majority of social arenas and disciplines that are mobilized to make gadgets and machines a part of this world. Most of the technological world is best represented by the image of the office worker at their cubicle pouring over data and documents, managing the tension of reproducing technological life. This deception is catastrophic for theory; it completely obscures the interdependence of high tech on social organization and the management of the masses. The defenders of this society are desperate for these domains to appear to be separate. For example, Americans are made to believe that they live in the land of free enterprise, free of control imposed by the dreaded 'planned economy' of Communist regimes. This is complete bullshit. How else could Amazon Prime guarantee next day delivery without the fastidious management of a

planned global economy? Managing workers through organizations and human resource departments, the gargantuan quantity of gadgets that masses of workers can produce, assembly lines, media spectacles, propaganda, and the use of psychoanalytic techniques by marketing firms form a unified logical whole, with common characteristics. In addition, each of these techniques are made possible by, and are contingent upon, the functioning of all the others. Technology-as-gadgets then—its common parlance use—doesn't do technology justice. This is a furiously technical society. Efficiency and order lurk around every corner, and every corner that blocks the movement of progress is erased. So while we don't always think it necessary to come to terms to start essays, we do think it is necessary to spend a bit of time discussing what we talk about when we talk about technology.

All humans use tools, but not all humans worship the study of the development of technical operations. There is much confusion about this. All human groups tend to perfect the techniques that make their way of life possible. Gatherers know where certain patches of plant foods exist on the land, when they will be ready to harvest, the best means of harvesting, how they must be cured if necessary, and the various ways to prepare them. This technical operation or technique is perfected and made efficient more and more with each time it is performed. Techniques are economized; they tend toward efficiency.

Techniques are not necessarily material tools, but they are also forms of social organization like the division of labor or magical practices. For Ellul, the essence of technologies is that they are means to an end that are perfected over time. They answer the question 'how?' This is why magical practices are technologies, or techniques. They are means to some end within their cosmology.

In most societies, social and spiritual practices create an assembly of obstacles to the pursuit of technical operations as an end in itself. As a result, the accumulation of technical operations is limited. The modern world is just the opposite. There is at present almost nothing in the way of the pursuit of technology for its own sake. Technology, that "neutral" phenomenon, as people often say, slips into every aspect of modern life. In order to convey this interrelated and interdependent character of the technological order, Ellul adopts the monolithic word technique. We use it as well, but we will use technique and technology somewhat interchangeably from here on to refer to the totality of technical operations in every field of human activity for a given society.

For Ellul, technique grows out of the machine, and the machine is the pure expression of technique. But eventually the machine becomes a minor element in the vast realm of technique.

[L]et the machine have its head, and it topples everything that cannot support its enormous weight... Everything had to be reconsidered in terms of the machine. And that is precisely the role technique plays. In all fields it made an inventory of what it could use, of everything that could be brought into line with the machine. The machine could not integrate itself into line with nineteenth-century society; technique integrated it. Old houses that were not suited to the workers were torn down; and the new world technique required was built in their place. Technique has enough of the mechanical in its nature to enable it to cope with the machine, but it surpasses and transcends the machine because it remains in close touch with the human order. The metal monster could not go on forever torturing mankind. It found in technique a rule as hard and inflexible as itself. Technique integrates the machine into society. It constructs the kind of world the machine needs and introduces order where the incoherent banging of machinery heaped up ruins. It clarifies, arranges, and rationalizes; it does in the domain of the abstract what the machine did in the domain of labor.

This shows how technology based on the machine spreads its logic through every detail of life in order to ensure its survival and reproduction. A similar confusion between tool and the obsessive study of the totality of tools exists with the way the word market is used in common parlance. The old market, the ‘bazaar’, was face-to-face, happened at a certain designated time and place, and was generally based on haggling. As Paoli shows, the market of the olden days is in every significant aspect the opposite of the market-economy. The global market, The Economy, is impersonal, unlimited by time or space, and all products are pre-exchanged with determined prices. You can purchase solar panels manufactured by Asian slaves at 3am from the comfort of your Tempur pedic mattress without communicating with a single soul if you have the money, a smartphone, and internet. This peculiar similarity in the way technology and the market are misconstrued as something ostensibly limited, but are in fact pervasive and totalizing, points to the deep intimacy between capitalism and technology.

Technique creates a new kind of human, one who is flexible, or is endowed with “plasticity” as Ellul says, because this new subject is forced to let go of values as the steamroller of modernity transform reality at an ever accelerating rate. Technique refers to the relentless logistical operation that characterizes modern life. Each of us are enjoined to coordinate, manage, and interpret the awesome power of techno-capitalist society in order to survive. But logistics are the pinnacle of military thinking, not social life. In this world all spontaneity is integrated as a detail into the dominant plan. And without spontaneity, creativity, ecstasy, and freedom begin to be bleached of any meaning.

Marx’s technophilia: why the left will never be able to critique technology

As late as 1848, one of the demands of the workers was the suppression of machinery... [M]en still suffered from the loss of equilibrium brought about by a too rapid injection of technique, and they had not yet felt the intoxication of the results. The peasants and the workers bore all the hardships of technical advance without sharing in the triumphs. For this reason, there was a reaction against technique, and society was split. The power of the state, the money of the bourgeoisie were for it; the masses were against.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the situation changed. Karl Marx rehabilitated technique in the eyes of the workers. He preached that technique can be liberating. Those who exploited it enslaved the workers, but that was the fault of the masters and not the technique itself.

The Technological Society

We had the opportunity to see the well known autonomist Marxist Silvia Federici speak in late 2018. At some point in her talk Federici said, “I’m not against technology”, and then spoke at length about all the problems with technology—pollution, land dispossession, social disintegration, etc. And yet, she prefaced this with, I’m not saying I’m against all these things. “Don’t get me wrong gang. I still worship where you worship.” Federici’s hedging of her position about technology is representative of most of what we know of the contemporary left. Through Ellul’s lens of technique, which includes the techniques of managing massive organizations, we can also

see why Marxists need to stay on the side of technology in order to envision their coordination of the vast industrial technological apparatus in their communized end game.

The fundamental premise of every political doctrine, to the extent that they refer to a person's disposition on capitalism, have already conceded to the technological imperative. Demotivational Training observes that people talk about the economy the way they talk about God, demonstrated by the imperative embedded in almost all discourse, "How can we get the economy to grow?" This imperative is disguised language for technological progress, for new means for creating new products. This would be obvious if it wasn't obscured by Marxists, most of whom are still focused on how we will communize these means when the social war finally places them in the hands of what's left of the proletariat. Communists, accelerationists, tiqunists, appellists, communication theorists, and most anarchists (i.e. the radical left) carefully avoid taking anything less affirmative than the 'neutrality' position on technology because they still need to organize people at some level to continue producing the goodies of modern life that they seem to think they won't need to give up after their revolution. As the Situationists, still the gold standard for the best of Marxist theory, said, "[Advances in material development] could be turned to good use—but only along with everything else... You can survive farther away and longer, but never live more. Our task is not to celebrate such victories, but to make celebration victorious—celebration whose infinite possibilities in everyday life are potentially unleashed by these technical advances." We find this optimistic attitude about technology more or less preserved in contemporary post-situationist theory such as Post-Civ: "Primitivists reject technology. We just reject the inappropriate use of technology. most technologies are being put to rather evil uses—whether warfare or simple ecocide—but that doesn't make technology inherently evil", and #accelerate "an accelerationist politics seeks to preserve the gains of late capitalism while going further than its value system, governance structures, and mass pathologies will allow." Sneakier still is the pamphlet, "Instructions for autonomy", which suggests that autonomy is something to be learned from The Party. Obviously autonomous actors need instruction (read: coercion) for operating technocivilization, because too many of us would just leave this world behind if we were given the chance.

All this lightweight theoretical work on technology neglects the fundamental mantra of technique, that because it was possible it was necessary. It is this logic that has unleashed technique and the means of production on humans and on the planet. It is impossible to separate the appropriate use of any technique from its full spectrum of possibilities, for it is the investigation of the full spectrum of instrumental possibilities that reveal each individual technique. Each stage of technical development becomes dependent on the prior stage either continuing or becoming replaced with something more efficient. Either way, the basis of huge inputs of energy and human plasticity must be reproduced in order to reproduce the means of production. This is especially the case with advanced industrial technology like microchips which are only possible as a result of several previous stages of technical development. To ensure this continues it is paramount to nurture a belief in progress.

Coercion, management, and organization are inseparable from the physical means of production. Marxists and the left have to ignore the reflection of the machine in social relations because they need to somehow coordinate the masses of workers in their vision of communism or communization. The only way to reproduce modern industrial technology is to guarantee the production and reproduction of a whole cornucopia of raw materials whose distribution is spread throughout the planet. It is impossible to envision accomplishing this without coercion. Marx-

ists need organization for their theory to be coherent which explains their superficial attitudes about technology. If the Marxists began a thorough investigation of technology, they would be forced to abandon their position!

The Situationists distinguish themselves, along with anarchists, for never having made calls for the seizure of the state, but they still were proponents of workers councils that would seize the means of production. For Ellul, the means of production only exist as a result of techniques of the state. “The basic effect of state action on techniques is to co-ordinate the whole complex. The state possesses the power of unification, since it is the planning power par excellence in society.” After all, the state funds massive scientific ventures that open the way for technological progress and defends them with its courts and armed bureaucrats. It follows then that there simply is no difference between seizing the means of production and seizing the apparatus of the state. Here is Marx’s debunked idea of seizing the state still alive and well.

Many people take no issue with positioning themselves as anti-capitalist and anti-state, but they seem to lose their nerve when confronted with the question of adopting an antitechnology position. Let’s be clear: most of the gadgets we (are forced to) enjoy today are the result of the state, capital, and technique. There will not be the communization conception of ‘flows’ of humans moving with joy and spontaneity from one site of production to the next to continue reproducing the world as we aesthetically and formally experience it. Just about everything must go. We cannot continue to have the material stuff of this world if we want to abolish this world. Abolishing this world necessitates abolishing its means of production.

Techno-Capital Spirituality

Nothing belongs any longer to the realm of the gods or the supernatural. The individual who lives in the technical milieu knows very well that there is nothing spiritual anywhere. But man cannot live without the sacred. He therefore transfers his sense of the sacred to the very thing which has destroyed its former object: to technique itself. In the world in which we live, technique has become the essential mystery

The Technological Society

Money truly is god.

An Inquiry into the Causes and Nature of the Poverty of People

Voyer provides us with a critique of the Situationists. His critique is that the Situationists didn’t scrutinize Marx with enough care and as a result the owners of society were able to defeat them by recuperating their ideas. Thus we must make Voyer’s critique of Voyer, which is to say, to critique the Marxism in his thought. The aim here is to arrive at a critique that is beyond society’s capacity for recuperation.

Voyer continues Marx’s investigation of the commodity by taking capitalists at their word. This allows him to articulate capitalist cosmology. The ritualistic activity of capitalists, their ruthless pursuit of profit, invests money and commodities with universal Value. We encounter Value everyday as the pre-established price of all the shit we buy. “Value is the ability that products of work have to exchange themselves in thought without any human intervention.” Marx spent hundreds of pages turning Value into something real, and in one sentence Voyer reveals it

as nothing more than a spook. From here, Voyer provides us, as Marx and the Situationists never did, with an adequate definition of what a commodity is:

a product of work that accomplishes exchange in thought, a product of work that by itself makes an abstraction of everything that could be an obstacle to exchange, a product of work gifted with spirit, a pre-exchanged¹ product of work. "Value" signifies nothing other than the thought of the commodity. "Commodity" signifies nothing other than a thing that thinks and talks. Some sing and dance...but all of them are really saying, underneath their apparent chatter: "I am only in appearance bread, in reality I am wine, iron, cotton." In fact what they say is even more basic, more general, they say, "I am only in appearance bread, wine, etc. In fact I am three dollars." What do commodities think about? Money. Money is the idea that is in every commodity.

At the core of Marxist thought is the focus on the relationship between the means of production and the immense accumulation of commodities, the economy being the collection of the totality of all the means of production and commodities. For most Marxists, just as trees, fungi, rain and animals make forests, humans make the economy. It is natural. Voyer begins his inquiry by showing that the economy is nothing more than an idea that runs on belief, that only exists as belief, and thus, does not really exist. The economy is the idea of a force that economizes everything. This is precisely what technique does to everything it touches. Here is where the commodity form and its general abstraction in the economy dovetail with Ellul's conception of technique. Each of these ideas point to the application of efficiency to every sphere of existence, including human communication. Voyer says:

The economy is the visible part of the commodity, the visible part of a world in which things practice humanity—practice universal exchange using humanity as a means. The invisible part of the world is the silence of man. The real part of this world is not the visible but the invisible part. The reality of this world is not the self-serving blabber of commodities but the silence of man. Thus in this world the true is only a moment of the false.

In our secular society, technological progress and money are God. Their pursuit ennobles the pious industrialist. Money acts as the holy spirit dwelling within all commodities, the means of production is the body of God on Earth, and the technological God issues new means and innovations for sustaining the economy's endless growth.

But Voyer dismisses this fundamental relationship between the commodity and technology because he did not scrutinize Marx's belief in the liberatory potential of technology. In a footnote of *An Inquiry*, Voyer ridicules Ivan Illich and those who focus on tools for not understanding that, in our world, tools are first of all commodities.

For this economist, as for all economists, he has no doubt that the economy is the reality of the world, and that changing the world will result in a change in this reality. But in fact, the reality of the world, that is to say, the reality of its unreality, is not the

¹ Voyer uses the word exchange in its more antiquated sense referring to the union of human communication and the exchange of material goods. The rise of commerce has eliminated this antiquated understanding of exchange which Voyer considers the "human activity par excellence."

economy but the commodity. The reality of the world is not “an industrial mode of production,” nor a market mode of production, but the commodity... The economy is the bourgeois conception of the commodity, the bourgeois conception of the unreality of the world. And so the conformist economist Illich would like to reduce the central question of publicity to a simple question of tooling, and to hide first, that the modern tool, before being a tool, is a commodity and, second, that what is fundamentally wrong with the modern tool is what is fundamentally wrong with the commodity.

The problem is that Voyer is using a flawed conception of the tool as a tangible object, separate from other means. As we have noted, Ellul expands the definition of technology from the emphasis on tools epitomized by the machine, to the totality of techniques and their pursuit, including techniques of social conditioning and social massification. This complicates the inquiry into the nature of the commodity because it means that the commodity is a technique, a tool, a means. The commodity could not have been unleashed without the immense accumulation of techniques, and vice versa.

Capitalist technique is designed to make things that think about money. Seizing these techniques—the state, the factories, the media apparatus, public transit, laboratories —and projecting them into even the most optimistic of circumstances, as theorized by communization theorists, will still result in producing things that think. Voyer either misses, or regards as insignificant, that the universal equivalence that Value and the commodity realize is a masterwork of rendering human communication efficient. It streamlines and harnesses the communication of billions of wage-slaves. If the commodity is a product of work that is pre-exchanged, machines pre-accomplish all meaningful work, so that a commodity is in fact a pre-accomplished product that is pre-exchanged. At last, this society has realized its end game of having no reason to speak or do anything. Texture has finally been abolished! Marx became enamored with the power of the means of production and the specter of his mistake is still with us.

The similarity we noticed between these two texts is apparent to anyone reading them side by side. There is an endless number of analogies between Voyer’s inquiry into the commodity economy and Ellul’s investigation of technique.

Ellul says, “Technique transforms everything that it touches into a machine”::“The essential characteristic of the commodity is that it first reproduces its own conditions, its perpetual self-justification, the new unknown worlds necessary for its development, and that nothing ever can oppose it in this domain where it stands unrivaled to the point that it is capable of destroying the world if nothing essential opposes it” says Voyer.

Voyer says, “The civilizing role of the commodity is to socialize in its horrific way things that were not social”::“Technique cannot be otherwise than totalitarian. It can be truly efficient and scientific only if it absorbs an enormous number of phenomena and brings into play the maximum of data. In order to coordinate and exploit synthetically, technique must be brought to bear on the great masses in every area” says Ellul.

Ellul says, “[Man] is a device for recording effects and results obtained by various techniques. He does not make a choice of complex, and in some ways, human motives. He can decide only in favor of the technique that gives the maximum efficiency. But this is not a choice. A machine could effect the same operation. ”:: “Alienation is not the

alienation of work...it is the alienation of the essential human activity—exchange—and the alienation of that which in this activity can be alienated, the idea of exchange. The more exchange becomes general and universal, the more it becomes the affairs of things and the more humanity becomes simply the spectator of the human activity of things.” says Voyer.

Both texts are an attempt to challenge the totality at the depths of its foundations and in the process their critiques corrode into one another, each from their particular perspective. The key point of connection is their analysis of the economy, because economics can be defined (to the chagrin of economists) as “the science of efficient choices.”

The technological God is the deity that fills the breach opened by the bourgeois revolution. He is the true man behind the curtain. Destroying this belief in technological progress, and its various calling cards - that everything is relative, that we believe that we don't believe anything anymore,² and a superficial apathy masking warm feelings for progress - is the prerequisite to the downfall of this society.

Techno-pessimism: Ellul's Technological Society and Paoli's Demotivational Training

...if a sudden change should occur and public opinion should turn against technique...the whole social edifice would be at stake.

The Technological Society

We are living in an era in which technology is continually rousing partisans into its morality, a morality of means, of the ever more purified pursuit of means. “[Technique] evolves in a purely causal way: the combination of preceding elements furnishes new technical elements. There is no purpose or plan that is being progressively realized. There is not even a tendency toward human ends. We are dealing with a phenomenon blind to the future, in a domain of integral causality.” We see here on the one hand an articulation of degraded postmodernism with no beliefs, no ends, no goals, and on the other a technological morality that frames everything. “[E]verything which is technique is necessarily used as soon as it is available. This is the principal law of our age.”

These traits of technique—the pure pursuit of means as an end, and the immediate implementation of newly discovered means—are more pernicious than they first appear to our post-modern secular eyes. The concern of this world is to figure out how to get things done. These are the laws built into every conversation, every computer, every blueprint, and every tool. Effects and affects are always peripheral, secondary, useless. Experience and feeling are always at the mercy of the cause of technology.

An instrument as complex as a personal computer is obviously an advanced realization of the “integrated causality” Ellul names, and it simply cannot exist without a technologically advanced global domination apparatus. It is representative of the depths of the prevailing naivete that we can't imagine or realize what it would take to produce and reproduce a vegan burrito,

² “The difference between ancient society, modernism, and post-modernism is this: the ancients knew that they believed, the modernists believed that they knew, and the post-modernists believe that they don't believe in anything anymore. It is precisely this latter belief that we have to destroy.” *Demotivational Training* p11-12

but some still think computers will magically keep producing themselves in our utopias. This isn't to suggest adopting a morality with regard to technology, it is to demonstrate that we are already intensely moralistic about technology; most people think it is good (while retaining an un-confessed pessimism). This belief simply has to go so that new ethics regarding technology and tools can blossom.

One approach to establishing these ethics can be found in Demotivational Training. This text has a considerable amount of theoretical overlap with *The Technological Society*, in particular Ellul's pessimism about the utter lack of means for recourse in the face of the power of the global techno-capitalist system. But Paoli sees this pessimism as a peculiar kind of ethic and form of self-defense within a system that is desperate to economize, integrate, and motivate all of us.

The crux of Paoli's argument also shares an analogy with a small, but fundamental concept describing the nature of technique that Ellul calls the 'self-augmentation' character of technology. People have a tendency to simplify and perfect their tasks and work, which ostensibly should improve quality of life over time in an ecologically balanced culture. But within the unified totality of the technological apparatus this urge is inverted against us. Each increase in efficiency adopted within a particular technical field slowly spreads and augments the totality of technical operations. It is the problem of how reforms rescue the sick society they intend to change, applied to the most granular tasks. As technique continues to integrate everything, it becomes more and more dependent upon the minor improvements of the technical world produced by its workers.

Paoli's title *Demotivational Training* mocks the raging war within corporations to figure out how to extract creativity from their human resources who have grown remedial as a result of living in the very world technique creates! Paoli slyly employs the degradation of life against itself in a desperate attempt to find a glimmer of hope for resistance. To hasten what he theorizes as the epidemic of demotivation plaguing late capitalism, Paoli coaches us to fight the drive to improve our work environment and allow the system to slowly degenerate. In the closing section of *Demotivational Training*, he argues for us to "cancel the project" because radical projects are often the kindling of dominant society's fire.

Although Ellul never suggested canceling the project, he was keenly aware of the futility of them. We were troubled throughout our reading of *The Technological Society* by why Ellul has not received more credit for providing a total critique of society. One reason is that he clearly did not have a militant public relations orientation like his situationist peers. Another reason is that Ellul's analysis led him to the conclusion that the technological society had not only become autonomous, but that revolt, incapable of stopping the techno-behemoth, was a new kind of opiate of the masses.

Technique diffuses the revolt of the few and thus appeases the need of the millions for revolt. The same could be said of all the "movements" started since the turn of the century in response to the frustration of the most elementary human impulses. But can it be maintained, therefore, that social movements such as surrealism, youth hostels, revolutionary parties, anarchism, and so on have failed? They have failed in that they have not achieved their own goals of re-creating the conditions of freedom and justice or of allowing man to rediscover a genuine sex life or intellectual life. But they have been completely successful from another point of view. They have performed the sociological function of integration. Technical means are so important, so difficult to achieve and to manage, that it is easier to have them if there is a group, a movement, an association.

Such movements are based on authentic impulses and valid feelings, and do allow a few individuals access to modes of expression which otherwise would have been closed to them. But their essential function is to act as vicarious intermediaries to integrate into the technical society these same impulses and feelings which are possessed by millions of other men. Herein lies their sociological character. Certain deep ecstatic instincts and impulses would otherwise escape the jurisdiction of the technical society and become a threat to it. Movements...are a sociological necessity to a technical milieu.

This sheer pessimism would have been anathema to Guy Debord and his merry Situationists.³ An additional reason that Ellul's work is less known is simply that his emphasis on the critique of technology was perhaps too dissonant for his era to accept. A half century ago, it was still possible to believe in the coming techno-utopia. We wager that no one really believes this today. Polls have demonstrated that Americans are no longer optimistic about technology,⁴ and here we are forced to contend with the strange schizophrenia that characterizes technological affect. A schizophrenia plagues the modern mind that holds a techno-pessimism and techno-optimism in its head simultaneously. We feel the peril and the convenience in our gadgets at once. This sort of tension cannot last, it will erode itself and decompose. Similar to Marx, Ellul seems to believe in the reality and power of the object of his study more than is appropriate, and this is where his pessimism meets with Paoli's observation that demotivation—of the worker or activist—is precisely what this world is producing and cannot bear. Because society can never deliver on its promises, it is generating a deficit in the realm of motivation and belief. This is perhaps the Achilles heel of the dominant order.

Applied Anti-Tech

Why can't people talk to each other in public places, places that are so incorrectly named? Here is the essential, unique question that contains all the others. Every other question that claims to be interesting in itself is an impostor, reformism, a diversionary maneuver on the part of the enemy. On this question, above all on the response to this question, the divide opens between the friends and enemies of money, the friends and enemies of the state. The question of the silence of people in the streets is the essential question. The response to this question is the strategic response to all questions. The response to this question suddenly provokes generalized chatter. One can easily understand that the enemy will do everything in its power not to have this question addressed.

An Inquiry into the Causes and Nature of the Poverty of People

One night, during the twilight of an Occupy camp we'd been frequenting, a man began unfolding a small table near the center of camp. After he erected it, he set up a coffee maker and

³ According to Ellul, the situationists declined Ellul's application to join them because he was a Christian. This is probably another reason why people have ignored him.

⁴ "A 2005 poll of 69,000 people in North America revealed that a majority, 51%, can be classified as "technological pessimists," meaning that they are at best indifferent to modern technology, and at worst outright hostile toward it." found in David Skrabina's introduction to *Technological Slavery*. Forrester Research study, "The State of Consumers and Technology: Benchmark 2005."

plugged it into a net of extension cords that lead to a generator. A friend chatted the man up, and he told us with excitement that he was going to brew coffee and sell it for \$0.50 a cup. Our friend suddenly became stern and assertive, and told him, "You can't do that here. We're not selling stuff here." Here was the seed of a group magical taboo. The camp, like all the others, was destroyed days later, but this magical taboo lives on. Standing Rock, for all of its shortcomings, can boast the honor of having maintained a habitat of industrial resistance free of commerce that lasted nearly a year and hosted tens of thousands of people. But unlike Occupy, prayer and spirituality were explicit goals and practices at Standing Rock. Many natives we met there from varied backgrounds and factions all insisted that non-natives begin to develop a spiritual life.

Money and technological progress have reigned within the spiritual void opened by the Enlightenment for several centuries in Europe, and they have conquered almost the entire globe. Technology is what secular people invest their belief in, and spending and making money is the daily practice of this peculiar form of malignant spiritual nihilism. The reigning sense that life is meaningless is a lie. This world, the world of progress, the world of the commodity, the technological society, is meaningless, but only because it is founded on such absurd logic. That logic is this: The ends justify the means, and the ends are means. The means justify the means. But just as any elementary school prisoner learns by the time they matriculate, you can't use the same word in its definition, lest the word become meaningless. So then, this world is meaningless, but we don't know if life itself is meaningless. What we can see is that humans generate meaning as a matter of our existence, of our daily activity. Even our dreadfully isolated technological society bombards us with meaning, it is just meaning that is meaningless, meaning that is false, a world that is totally false. The irony of this world is that to be a nihilist in a nihilist society is to believe that life has meaning!

The Situation is Hopeless, Just Hopeless: A Pessimist's Review of *The Uninhabitable Earth* by Mallory Wournos

Soon people will be coming here to make documentaries about how we've been forgotten, about how nothing has been done.

survivor of the Brumadinho dam collapse

Some call them 'mountains of doom.' Dotted the landscape of once-green Wales to this day are the stygian slag heaps resulting from centuries-old collieries, mammoth piles of debris that tower above the mining towns. They are cheerless sights, which one writer likened to "spiritless cathedrals of the industrial age." As was proven in horror at Aberfan on October 21, 1966, these looming giants are killers.

from the entry on the Aberfan landslide in *Darkest Hours*

I've been a disaster enthusiast since I was young enough to read. That might sound strange and gruesome, but I somehow got my hands on a massive tome of despair called *Darkest Hours: A Narrative Encyclopedia of Worldwide Disasters* by Jay Robert Nash. I was mesmerized by the horror, more visceral and terrifying than the movies that my Grandpa was the only one who would let me watch late at night; pictures of tangled metal cutting through flesh, searchers balancing precariously on rubble searching for survivors, grief on their faces, and rows of bodies covered in white sheets laying on cracked and crooked roads after an earthquake. The first entry is the tragic landslide in Aberfan, Wales, where a slagheap 800 ft. high was weakened, "releasing a two-million-ton torrent of rock, coal, and mud, which cascaded onto the Pantglas Junior and Infants School and 17 other buildings... crushed to death and buried alive were 145 persons, of whom 116 were children." Stories like this profoundly shaped my view on the disasters we inflict upon the world and therefore ourselves, more than any statistics on things like carbon levels; I had no concept of that then and no use for them now.

I still harbor a passion for these stories, so when I heard about *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* by David Wallace-Wells, billed by one critic as "a terrifying polemic that reads like a cross between Stephen King and Stephen Hawking" (I hoped for more of the former than the latter), I was excited to see what the latest in climate change literature had to offer, and what it offers is an overwhelming accounting of humanity's sins.

The book is divided into chapters that, like Dante, take us through different hells we are already experiencing, and describe punishments we can only begin to appreciate: heatwaves, famine, floods, wildfires, pollution, disease, economic collapse, and conflict. We're talking destruction on such a scale that it is considered a *hyperobject*; a "conceptual fact so large and complex that, like the internet, it can never be properly comprehended." That climate is something we have

no control over is the cause of epidemics of distress and depression, which this book will not alleviate. Nor should it.

Anybody in the United States who has gone to see a therapist, psychiatrist, or other mental health professional has inevitably heard the positivity spiel. It goes like this: you go in for terrible depression, anxiety, or any number of conditions that are branded abnormal or deviant. Sometimes this is because of personal problems—grief over the death of a loved one for instance—or visual and auditory hallucinations, things that in the past been were the realm of shamans and witches, but are now efficiently exorcised through pharmaceuticals. However, more and more people are seeking help because of a deep existential crisis, which at its root is the state of the world.

The response of these experts is to dismiss your concerns as something to avoid thinking about (perhaps using behavior modification), something holding you back (from reaching your potential), and something that can be fixed (with the right medications). Becoming an empty shell is better, apparently, than feeling an emotional connection to the world, which in these times can only distress you. The last thing this society wants is for people to stop participating, by which they mean going to work each day and contributing to society. Panic attacks? There's a pill for that. Nightmares? There's a pill for that as well.

But maybe nightmares are real, and none of us can ultimately escape them. Everybody will be touched by the consequences of humanity's hubris and ecocidal ways. Ultimately, this acknowledgment is what lies at the core of *The Uninhabitable Earth*.

Each climate-related event can be expanded on to reveal the terrifying details of what we have faced, are facing, and will face. It would have been nice for Wallace-Wells to get even more detailed with his descriptions. Perhaps it's my penchant for the morbid, but the best example of this may be Luis Urrea's *The Devil's Highway*, which tells the story of a group of Mexican migrants who were found dead after being ditched by a coyote in the Sonoran desert. Tracing their path to disaster, Luis does not spare the reader, as the migrants weren't spared on their trek to seek out a better life in a country hostile to their dreams. The description of their fate is stomach-churning. Here, he describes all six stages of heat death: heat stress, heat fatigue, heat syncope, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. He describes each in detail. Consider the following, which is just one stage, the final one:

Your blood is as low as it can get. Dehydration has reduced all your inner streams to sluggish mud- holes. Your heart pumps harder and harder to get fluid and oxygen to your organs. Empty vessels within you collapse. Your sweat runs out.

With no sweat, your body's swamp-cooler breaks. The thermostat goes haywire. You are having a core meltdown.

Your temperature redlines—you hit 105, 106, 108 degrees. Your body panics and dilates all blood capillaries near the surface, hoping to flood your skin with blood to cool it off. You blish. Your eyes turn red: blood vessels burst, and later, the tissue of the whites literally cooks until it goes pink, then a well-done crimson.

Your skin gets terribly sensitive. It hurts, it burns. Your nerves flame. Your blood heats under your skin. Clothing feels like sandpaper. Some walkers at this point strip nude. Originally, BORSTAR rescuers thought this stripping was a delirious panic, an attempt to cool off at the last minute. But often, the clothing was eerily neat, carefully folded

and left in nice little piles beside the corpses. They realized that walkers couldn't stand their nerve-endings being chafed by their clothes. The walkers stripped to get free of the irritation.

Once they're naked, they're surely hallucinating. They dig burrows in the soil, apparently thinking they'll escape the sun. Once underground, of course, they bake like a pig at a luau. Some dive into the sand, thinking it's water, and they swim in it until they pass out. They choke to death, their throats filled with rocks and dirt. Cutters can only assume they think they're drinking water.

Your muscles, lacking water, feed on themselves. They break down and start to rot. Once rotting in you, they dump rafts of dying cells into your already sludgy bloodstream.

Proteins are peeling off your dying muscles. Chunks of cooked meat are falling out of your organs, to clog your other organs. The system closes down in a series. Your kidneys, your bladder, your heart. They jam shut. Stop. Your brain sparks. Out. You're gone.

Wallace-Wells doesn't see himself as an environmentalist, or even, as they say, a "nature person," having grown up in cities "enjoying gadgets built by industrial supply chains I hardly think twice about." He truly represents the average person in the West today and this is exactly who this book is for, because presumably none of this will be new for anybody reading this paper, who are already critical of civilization. That some pretty fringe ideas are being presented to a mainstream audience is what makes it important. Some of the names he drops will be familiar to many of you—James C. Scott, Robinson Jeffers, and Paul Kingsnorth to name a few. But to most these will be new names and new ideas, perhaps in a paradoxical way providing comfort—in a time where we can find little—by guiding us to new paths secreted away. That is, if you see the coming chaos and revenge of the wild to be comforting, with minds unclouded by the delusions identified by Wallace-Wells:

The slowness of climate change is a fairy tale, perhaps as pernicious as the one that says it isn't happening at all, and comes to us bundled with several others in an anthology of comforting delusions: that global warming is an arctic saga unfolding remotely; that it is strictly a matter of sea level and coastlines, not an enveloping crisis sparing no place and leaving no life undeformed; that it is a crisis of the 'natural' world, not the human one; that those two are distinct and that we live today somehow outside or beyond or at the very least defended against nature, not inescapably within and literally overwhelmed by it; that wealth can be a shield against the ravages of warming; that the burning of fossil fuels is the price of continued economic growth; that growth, and the technology it produces, will allow us to engineer our way out of environmental disaster; that there is any analogue to the scale or scope of this threat, in the long span of human history, that might give us confidence in staring it down.

For each of these narratives, the author provides ample evidence to chisel them apart, using science and statistics to back them with examples from both micro and macro catastrophes. It's a laundry list of climate horror you can't ignore; readers are strapped down with their eyes pried open, forced to look at what we have brought upon ourselves. Nature's ultraviolence, in the form of hurricanes, earthquakes, and other disasters.

Again, readers of *Black Seed* may feel this is tedious. More of interest to green anarchists is what Wallace- Wells has to say further into the book, where he talks about “the climate kaleidoscope,” beginning with a chapter on storytelling—one of the most important things that can be done by those of us hurting, fighting, and struggling to survive in this doomed society. Writing our own myths to counter those of the worldeaters is imperative, but no easy task considering our scant resources versus the vast majority of the global media.

One of the most damaging myths that haunts the new man, *homo in- dustrialis*, is the idea that surroundings of concrete, strip malls, air-conditioned cars, and heated homes have insulated mankind from the dangers of the natural world. We have not moved farther away from nature, on the contrary. In his brilliant and harrowing book, *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan*, Brett Walker describes this well:

the pain and suffering that remind us of our relationship to nature is caused by the modern technologies and engineered environments that are meant to shelter us from certain kinds of pain, meaning that, paradoxically, the more technologically driven modern life becomes, and the more alienated from nature it thus appears, the more we are reminded in painful ways of our timeless connection to nature...Our bodies are porous and easily insulted—easily industrialized—inescapably tied to the environments we inhabit; not only the food we eat but the air we breathe and the water we drink can prove dangerous. In this respect, modernity and its technologies and engineered landscapes have not distanced us from nature...

The stories in *The Uninhabitable Earth* also remind us that we are intricately linked to our surroundings. Poison the land, and we too are poisoned. Modern medicine will do everything it can to discover the resulting human diseases and treat them (as long as they can afford it, or to stem the tide of a cataclysmic epidemic). Scientists all over the world devoting their lives to discovering how to cheat death. From individual mortality to human extinction we are taught to fear non-existence, so people tighten their blinders until they can't see their intimate relationship with the wild, and choose instead to continue believing they have overcome the kinds of problems other animals face, up to and including death. These ideas have played a large part in leading us to where we are today. There will always be consequences for our actions, and there's no way to beat nature when we are part of it. Each new technology brings with it new possibilities for frightening events: consider a future in which it's commonplace to hear about another electric vehicle exploding, or another self-driving car plowing through a crowd, adding to the already massive numbers of yearly vehicle deaths. One doesn't need to think of nanotechnology and AI to see that where we're headed isn't going to be pleasant, especially when things already look so bleak.

Humans lost when they began dismissing omens of doom, and instead turned to numbers and experts. These numbers might tell us, for instance, that this many whales turned up with plastic in their stomachs, the weight of that plastic, and all the information that can be garnered from the corpse before it explodes spectacularly, cold reason masking the suffering of the magnificent creature. The 40 lbs of plastic is more than enough evidence that we have crossed the point of no return, and yet we collect and search through more and more data in a desperate attempt to find an answer that will magically fix the state the world is in. Why are people afraid to look? An article written by Wallace -Wells posted on the *NY Mag* website addresses this:

Why can't we see the threat right in front of us? The most immediate answer is obvious: It's fucking scary. For years now, researchers have known that 'unrealistic optimism is a pervasive human trait,' one that, whatever you know about how social-media addicts get used to bad news, leads us to discount scary information and embrace the sunnier stuff.

And the generation of economists and behavioral psychologists who've spent the last few decades enumerating all of our cognitive biases have compiled a whole literature of problems with how we process the world, almost every single example of which distorts and distends our perception of a changing climate, typically by making us discount the threat.

So many remain optimistic, even though governments show no signs of implementing their own regulations. Even the extremely moderate proposal of the Green New Deal, a bill that was more symbolic than anything, was killed before ever being seriously considered by lawmakers (see the now infamous speech overflowing with memes by Senator Lee of Utah). By now we should know that these green energy solutions mean nothing except fatter wallets for those who invest in these scams. Ask the villagers in China who militantly resisted the building of solar panel factories. They know better than anyone that there's nothing "green" about it. They are simply new technologies that don't replace old tech running on fossil fuels, but are merely placed adjacent to them, creating an even larger footprint.

If you're a pessimist, don't expect to make any friends. It's more likely you will be dismissed outright—slandered as defeatist or worse—when presenting someone with evidence that challenges their sunny dispositions about what humanity is and what it is capable of (we as a species have proven plenty capable of destruction). This is just more reason to push back against the crack of the activist whip that demands everybody do something, even though most of us realize that changes in, say, individual consumption, would have to be on a worldwide scale. If the hippies failed to conjure their worldwide awakening (proto-wokeness), what chance to these idealists have in this much more fragmented society that just can't stop consuming at a rate unprecedented in human history? Their answers only rearrange the same logic of capitalism that created and supports these massive but unstable states to begin with.

There is a reason for the cult of optimism: it keeps people going. In an effort to prevent burnout you must have hope that you can make a change. Usually optimists, curiously, have no concrete solutions to the worst of the problems on the horizon, only judgement for those who they see as apathetic. Wallace-Wells distances himself from pessimism many times (e.g. "Each of us imposes suffering on our future selves every time we flip on a light switch, buy a plane ticket, or fail to vote. Now we all share the responsibility to write the next act.") Not only does he describe himself as an optimist, he makes the claim that to be pessimistic about humanity's prospects is to be apathetic to human and non-human suffering. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Brett Walker's *Toxic Archipelago* begins with a horrific story of a pod of orcas becoming trapped between fast moving thick ice and the rocky coast. A mother, desperately, vainly, trying to protect her calf, was the only one to be rescued by locals. The remaining 11 were crushed, slashed and ripped apart by the jagged rocks, the sound of their screams breaking through the howling wind. Of course, when scientists performed necropsies, they found the PCBs and mercury de-

tected in the blubber to be eleven times higher than normal for whales in Japanese coastal waters. He goes on to reflect on choosing this story to open the prologue:

I must confess that, partway through writing this book, when I heard the story of this destroyed orca pod, a darker tone began to permeate parts of my analysis and narrative. The image of a mother orca trying in vain to protect her deformed calf was hard to shake, particularly because I assume some blame, as a member of homo sapien industrialis, for their destruction...I tried to exorcise the darker side of this book during later editing and rewriting, but I was unable or, quite possibly, unwilling to do so. No doubt, when they read the pages ahead, some of my colleagues will cry out, 'He narrates environmental declension!' And rightly so, I should add. But I remain unapologetic: I am a historian and I am calling it as I see it, and I see environmental decline and deterioration everywhere.

Unfortunately in the end, Wallace-Wells, even in the face of his growing collection of similar horror stories, suggests if we really cared we'd run to the voting booths posthaste. His point isn't about purity, but about a sober assessment of the scale of change necessary, and I agree with Wallace-Wells that the only thing that would make even the smallest impact (using human suffering as the barometer here), is massive political engagement that would put enough pressure on the jugular of corporations and other profiteers of industry to choke them out, as no regular person on the street has any power to force the issue at all.

Is all this negativity just a sad and desperate plea to act now before it's too late (as if it already isn't)? For the pessimist, the answer is no. Pessimism has no solutions or answers to these disasters. However things change it won't be for the better. Even places seemingly out of reach will one day face the wrath of the wild forces. Nature will cause more destruction than anarchists could ever dream of achieving, and she shows no remorse, no discrimination. Anybody is a potential victim. While some in the direct path at this juncture are most vulnerable, even the well-off—who can simply rebuild or move entirely—will suffer. There might not be any perilous journeys for them across deserts and oceans to reach safer land, but rest assured they won't be able to evade the inevitable cataclysms to come.

Most people have no time, or are unwilling to listen to prophets of doom these days, being stuck in front of glowing screens and working to survive. And when people finally leave their jobs they want to come home to binge Netflix, not read about the latest climate horrors. Hell, they know if they wanted to there's no reason to even check the headlines. One can simply walk out into the city and see that suffering and death is all around us, and that we suffer ourselves, every day, from civilization's debilitating effects, both psychological or physical.

Calamity and its "invisible undermining of self," also undermines our ideas of reality. Charles Darwin, after experiencing an earthquake in Concepcion, Chile, wrote: "A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations: the earth, the very emblem of society, has moved beneath our feet like a thin crust over a liquid; one second of time has created in the mind a strange idea of insecurity, which hours of reflection would not have produced." This is what can be called "nature's agency;" a reminder that *homo industrialis*, despite seeming omnipotence as it builds skyscrapers higher and higher, is actually pitifully weak in the face of nature's strength. Ultimately, we aren't in charge. Is this fatalism? Perhaps, but maybe that is better than being in denial of the storm on the horizon. Coming to accept this means giving up control to the chaotic

forces of the wild, where we will drop to our knees in awe of its power, relinquishing our stolen crown.

There's A Twitter for That?! by Aragorn!

This article has nothing to do with the IAF. I have no problem whatsoever with the idea that there is a new “collective of Indigenous anarchists that includes one Indigenous Marxist,” and that is “striving for anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and antifascism.” I mean I also don't think it matters—other than being a sign of the times—that something that I value has found its voice on the Internet (for better and definitely for worse). But it is surreal and demonstrates a lot of things that are worth reflecting on and evaluating about radical projects up till now and into the future.

There is an indigenous Twitter?

On the face of it the idea it is a no-brainer that there is a little corner of Twitter where indigenous activists find each other and share information. It couldn't be more resource-light to share news about indigenous action, analysis, and strategy. Twitter is also a perfect medium to keep updating, pinging, and doing the bare minimum of what web apps do to keep one in the loop.

Which is the say that the churn of Twitter is no different than that of a dozen other services one feels obligated to subscribe to, to understand the zeitgeist of our time. Why should indigeneity be any different? Why does it feel so bitter and hollow to say that out loud?

I do not begrudge indigenous people the right to not disappear. It is stupid to have to even pause and say it. But my aesthetic revulsion to the largest platform of one-way communication also means that I think we should not stand mute. But what I want is impossible. I want the deep underlying reality of native life to be formed like a sort of laser beam. I want it to burn into the soul of a humanity that is fucking it all up. I want indigeneity to be a force of change that is undeniable, permanent, and fatal to the logic of Western Empire. Twitter feels like something else entirely.

Is it a qualitative improvement to print ten thousand pieces of this paper articulating an indigenous position than to share with ten thousand people up-to-the-minute information? Well, yes it is, but the effort this represents in writing, designing, and distributing might be worthless. It depends on your goal, of course.

If your goal is to create an aesthetic of indigenous desire, to reflect on a generational question, or to build a movement, then a newspaper is probably an historical artifact. It is far too resource-intensive, and it is so fucking slow: this project is the result of months of effort by a half dozen people or so. It wasn't full time work but it was deliberative and iterative. Whereas creating a Twitter account takes one motivated person and a pot of coffee. More pointedly while a Twitter account can call itself anything, whether it in fact is a federation or exemplifies the best in anti-bad-stuff thought, is a matter of belief. There is no accountability.

There is, in fact, nothing human at all about a Twitter account, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

What there is is search. Like an interest in beach volleyball, the Kardashians, or space travel, all it takes to be part of Indigenous Twitter is the capacity to type the term into the search bar. Today it leads you to news about Brazil and the potential genocide of natives by Bolsonaro, the state of Maine replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day, and a landmark legal victory in Ecuador. There was also an ad for the new John Wick movie. I'll download that in six months once it makes it to the torrent sites.

Support and support

Even as I type this I feel so exhausted. If you have made it this far in an issue of the Green Anarchist newspaper *Black Seed* you don't need your engine primed about whether the corporation Twitter Inc is on the side of the total liberation of people along lines best described as anti-modern, transformative, or indigenous. You are for this total liberation, as I am, but the devil, as they say, is in the details. How do we do it. How can the process of doing it bring us together, stronger, and heal all the ways we are broken.

What does support even mean any more, since we are naturally for all of the good things. We can even repeat how For Good we are with chants and repeated group behaviors. We can write checks. We can sign up for every social media expression of how downright good we are and how we have materially, existentially, and/or quantifiably supported good things. What does support even mean? I ask that question sincerely. Especially in the context of the Internet, the idea of support seems to be more about being seen as supportive rather than actual material support. I mean it is obvious that if, as for many artists, exposure is valid payment than linking to information can be seen as support. Support is clearly a modern kind of newspeak term that is code for performing support but isn't necessarily that related to actual support, as say, an exchange of material goods would be.

Should support require some sort of material sacrifice to be considered actual? It seems so depression-era thinking to even say, but a soup line up in front of an old WPA sign is support in a way that a thousand retweets don't seem to compare to. But somehow the modern human animal thinks it is the other way around. In the attention economy we get to eat dust and celebrate celebrity. Our interest is in logo design and color contrast action shots and not a lifeway beyond recognition, not reducible to a meme.

It is worth noting that when one subscribes to the IAF Twitter feed the recommended other feeds include IGD (It's Going Down), Black Rose Federation, and Revolutionary Left Radio. Three projects that are nothing more than support sites (although IGD and RLR arguably have an entertainment aspect to them, BRF does not.). By the end of a day (or an hour) one could arguably support all the possible Twitter things, and not one person would notice.

Orientalism

Buried in here are a number of issues that are hard to access. If I were to indict the news/support/entertainment complex it would begin with an examination of who we are versus who we cover. If we are part of a movement to attack and change the world then sharing stories of strangers who use our terminology, wear our clothes, and eat our food doesn't seem particularly problematic.

What if our stories are actually stories of other people who we don't and can't talk to. Where do our stories become their stories?

Orientalism is a term used by art historians and literary and cultural studies scholars for the imitation or depiction of aspects in the Eastern world. These depictions are usually done by writers, designers, and artists from the West.

Wikipedia

In the universe that measures people by how racist, sexist, transphobic, and generally “fucked up” people are, to be orientalist is pretty bad. It is among the worst kind of “othering” and is often taken to be the final word on a person. Being orientalist is also central to the colonial project and to every project that has otherwise been described as a “support project” up till now. It is the patronizing idea that we (by any definition of we) know how to help people better than they can help themselves. And it has a whiff of being true, as often times we (as colonized subjects who also colonize) have more resources (money) than those we are helping. As Jesus said in Luke 6:20-21 “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” He said a bunch of other assertive shit about how great the poor are but I think you get the point. Christians, and by extension the West, draw a line between us and them and it has a lot of strange and terrible implications.

I want to use the term “orientalism” to describe those implications, to get at a point that isn't particularly friendly to many, many people who I would describe as friends. As much as I find anarchist security culture (which essentially can be described as an arrogance about how important we are as individuals) annoying I basically agree with it to the extent that our representation should be controlled by us (collectively and individually) and not them (systems of control that usually are state agencies). Selfies not fixed cameras.

But how we (collectively and individually) choose to represent ourselves, especially in “our” media, is nightmarishly terrible. The same Twitter search I referenced earlier (re: indigenous) is a case in point. Representations of natives are either as performers (in traditional regalia) or members of bourgeois culture (in proper clean clothes at bill signings and whatnot). Paper dolls, only very rarely with a third dimension. But media, even and especially “our” media, is even worse.

Again, nothing new here, I've been railing against the orientalism of natives by the left for decades (as have more articulate voices than mine who have inspired me). The newer point is this: in our fight against orientalism we have chosen to create an empty space where representation would otherwise exist. In our yearning to not-unfairly-por- tray-our-subject we have generally chosen to say nothing. When given the choice we have been vague, and that has allowed our position to be misrepresented by those who have no compunction about orientalizing everything around them. Rather than articulating a charismatic position that contradicts the orientalist one, we have (seemed to) hedge.

The IAF is not a bad actor here. Their website is a better impression of them than their twitter feed and although there isn't a lot of original content, what there isn't terrible. It focuses on border issues, ongoing struggles, and some history. It is representational and while the issue of orientalism is not confronted, there is this glancing blow in the *About* section.

We must be able to articulate an Anarchism that both speaks to the material realities of our relatives both living on the rez and in diaspora, all while maintaining the diverse perspectives of our peoples' various cultures. We must create a place where these conversations can be had... where our ideas and dreams can be fleshed out. IAF strives to provide the space for this to happen.

This is a very high bar to set for your project and it is not really in evidence in either the Twitter or website content. What is in evidence is a version of other people's words and activism. The place where conversations can be had is a Twitter stream, with other anons, in the chaos of an unthreaded, tweetstorm environment.

I don't mean to lean so heavily on Twitter (although I've never had a satisfactory conversational experience there), as every forum, platform, and mechanism on the Internet has the same or similar problems. Instead I'm attempting to sympathize with IAF's problem. I've had the same enormously large and ambitious goal and have also failed at it.

The medium is the message in this case. If you want 10,000 subscribers and to utilize social media platforms by their own logic you don't also get to not-be-orientalist. You get to tell stories, many of them might even be good ones, but at some point they aren't your stories. They are someone else's and any rhetoric about "fleshing out our ideas and dreams" is aspirational, and not exactly honest. It might even be fair to say these stories are a mechanism by which we orientalize our own experience.

Federalism vs Confederalism

If I understand correctly, the IAF and their website is somehow related to the FAI (Federation Anarquista Indigena) in South America. I'll provide links to these groups so you can do your own research as I have no first hand experience to draw upon beyond what I've read there. But, perhaps, how these groups are linked and by extension how we would also link to them might be an important lesson for the future. In a time when we want to abolish all of the things, are terms like federation, confederacy, and autonomy salvageable and if they are, how?

Here it is appropriate to state a bias. The use of the term "federation" is troubled in the English language anarchist space. To use the word in good faith in the 21st century is a short cut to position yourself as a class-struggle anarchist: as a red (communist) anarchist rather than a black, green, or purple one. For an indigenous anarchist project to align itself, even unwittingly, with this position is strange. More pointedly, there is a fifty year tradition of anarchist federations including SRAF (Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation), Love & Rage, NEFAC, and Black Rose Federation that is worth knowing and distancing oneself from. This is not to say these federations are bad but that they hold positions about the primacy of, for instance, the working class' role in social revolution, that are a pretty far distance from most indigenous perspectives.

On a structural level, the question is where do we draw the lines. A federation has certain implications that seem onerous to me but I understand why people would make them. The first is the question of organization coherence. The second is a form of organizing that hasn't exactly been successful in the past few decades. (It hasn't succeeded at social revolution but perhaps it's been a good way to throw a potluck or bake- sale.) But my experience is in North American activist circles. YMMV. I consider a federation an enclosure but it doesn't have to be and perhaps

the IAF/FAI points to a new model. One that hasn't been explored by the IAF literature at this point but that raises a provocative idea.

More attractive to me, would be something more closely mirroring a confederacy, not unlike the Iroquois Confederacy. But perhaps this is a conversation about scale as much as about how people organize. In the anarchist use of the word, a federation is usually a few groups of people attempting to stitch together common projects. A dozen groups of about a dozen people each is aspirational nowadays but even Love and Rage (in the '90s) numbered a couple hundred members (in over 20 chapters or so). A confederacy, in my understanding, would be thousands of members who aren't tightly stitched together at all (sharing neither language, territory, nor function) but an agreement of peace and sharing. That sounds right to me.

Perhaps it's enough to say here that there is a history and that words have meaning. For the IAF, as far as I can tell, the F (ederation) part of their name is probably rhetoric and not political weaponry or intention (other than perhaps by their marxist member ;-)). They post news stories from mostly not-North America on Twitter, even I can give them a break on this front.

References

https://twitter.com/IAF_FAI

<https://twitter.com/FaiMujer>

<https://iaf-fai.org/>

BC Indigenous Land Defense Updates

Secwepemc 'Tiny House Warriors' and TransMountain Extension Tar Sands Pipeline Resistance

In Summer of 2017 members of the Secwepemc nation and supporters began construction of the first of 10 mobile tiny houses on one of their old village sites. The Secwepemc 'Tiny House Warriors' plan to strategically site the tiny houses with land defenders living in them throughout their territory along the proposed route of the TransMountain Extension pipeline. This project is part of an effort to reoccupy their territories and establish villages to heal from colonization and revive their traditional way of life.

From the declaration of the Secwepemc: "Investors take note, the Trans Mountain Pipeline project and any other corporate colonial project that seeks to go through and destroy our 180,000 square km of unceded territory will be refused passage through our territory. We stand resolutely together against any and all threats to our lands, the wildlife and the waterways. We are committed to upholding our collective and spiritual responsibility and jurisdiction to look after the land, the language and the culture of our people." In the summer of 2018, partly in response to public opposition that threatened the outcome of the pipeline, the Canadian government purchased the TransMountain Extension pipeline for \$4.5 billion from Kinder Morgan. On July 14th 2018, Canadian RCMP evicted the Tiny House construction.

The project moved the tiny houses to Blue River camp where they are currently occupying a proposed Kinder Morgan Man Camp* site that will bring over a thousand men into the unceded Secwepemc Territory. The Tiny House Warriors are seeking support for the next phase of construction.

To learn more and support this effort visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/tinyhousewarriors/>.

Unist'ot'en Camp and Coastal GasLink Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

Pipeline Resistance

Unist'ot'en Camp has entered into one of its most difficult standoffs with energy companies and the Canadian state to date. On December 14, 2018, the Supreme Court of Canada approved an interim injunction for TC Energy (formerly TransCanada) subsidiary Coastal GasLink Ltd. to conduct pre-construction activities on Unist'ot'en territory. All five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation responded by agreeing to support the Gidimt'en clan establishing a checkpoint about 20 km down the road from the Unist'ot'en Camp checkpoint. Both clans re-established their traditional "free, prior, and informed consent" protocol for any party that wished to enter the territory. In early January 2019, the Gidimt'en camp was raided and Canadian RCMP (cops) forcibly

invaded Unist'ot'en territory. Since then, RCMP have been protecting the injunction, allowing Coastal GasLink to conduct surveys and begin the construction of man camps to house workers on Unist'ot'en land for pipeline construction which is part of a \$40 billion LNG export project. After the invasion the Tsayu clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation joined the fight with the Unist'ot'en and Gidimt'en clans by occupying their traditional territory, re-establishing a traditional trapline, and maintaining an additional "free, prior, and informed consent" checkpoint. The Likhtsamisyu clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation announced in April that they will begin reoccupying their territories as well to resist the CGL pipeline. The Gidimt'en have continued to maintain their checkpoint despite regular harassment by the cops. On May 28, the Supreme Court will decide whether to grant CGL an interlocutory or permanent injunction for the construction of the man camp and pipeline, which could escalate industry aggression and police violence. The Unist'ot'en, Gidimt'en, and Likhtsamisyu camps are seeking support with establishing and maintaining the occupations. To learn more and support these efforts visit: unistotencamp.com yintahaccess.com likhtsamisyu.com <https://www.facebook.com/Tsayu-Land-Defenders-145084489749640/>

*"man camp" is slang in the indigenous land defense scene for all-male worker camps, infamous for hosting men who rape and murder indigenous women. These camps have a statistically increased rate of murders and rapes related to them.

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