

ANTI-AUTHORITY

DAILY REVOLT

RETURN FIRE

INDIVIDUAL WILL

DE-CIVILISATION

We Can Be Worse Still
(for one who died in the
battle for life)

Who Is It?
& democracy's
discontents

Veganism: Why Not
(an alienated solution to
a problem of
alienation?)

**'At the Root of My
Survival'**
(reflections on
mutilation, facing
terrorism charges,
and not abandoning our
own)

Wild Plants:
Hawthorne (berries)
& Sweet Chestnuts

...and more!

VOLUME 5, CHAPTER III

AUTUMN 2017



... the unknown, the uncertain, seduces me. I'm filled with a desire for adventure, and I don't give a damn for success.

I hate your society of bureaucrats and administrators, millionaires and beggars. I don't want to adapt to your hypocritical customs nor to your false courtesies. I want to live out my enthusiasms in the pure, fresh air of freedom. Your streets, drafted according to plan, torture my gaze, and your uniform buildings make the blood in my veins boil with impatience. And that's enough for me. I'm going to follow my own path, according to my passions, changing myself ceaselessly, and I don't want to be the same tomorrow as I am today. I stroll along and I don't let my wings be clipped by the scissors of any one person. I share none of your moralism. I am going forth, eternally passionate and burning with the desire to give myself to the world, to the first real person that approaches me, to the ragged-trousered traveller, but never to the grave and conceited wise-men who would regulate the length of my stride. Nor to the doctrinaire who would like to clutter my mind with formulas and rules. I am no intellectual; I am a human being – a woman who feels a great vibration within herself before the impulses of nature and amorous words. I hate every chain, every hindrance; I love to walk along, nude, letting my flesh be caressed by the rays of the voluptuous sun. And, oh, old man! I will care so very little when your society breaks into a thousand pieces and I can finally live my life.

Who are you, little girl, fascinating like a mystery and savage like instinct?

I am Anarchy.



WE CAN BE WORSE STILL

– reflections & thoughts on the month following the disappearance of Santiago Maldonado

[ed. – Report by 'Some anarchists in Buenos Aires', concerning the rage unfolding in Argentina, a country haunted by the ghosts of 30,000 disappeared during the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, and more continuing into democracy...

To update so far: one month to the day after Santiago's disappearance, tens of thousands of people demonstrated on September 1st in Buenos Aires, with six cops wounded in the capital and more coming under molotov fire in Bolsón, Patagonian region. Across the Brazilian border, the Argentine consulate in Porto Alegre was paint-splattered, while barricades were erected and police attacked in Valparaíso, Chile. So far, aside from embassy rallies in a couple of capitals and attacks on Benetton stores (see below) in Milan and Madrid, there has been little reaction on the so-called 'Old Continent'... This was also noted by some comrades postering "in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula:

A Corunha, a port city from which hundreds of immigrant ships left for Latin America. But practically nil is the information on this side of the Atlantic[...] Nor did we expect it to be any different. Colonizing Europe has never ceased to be so, but little is said here about the devastation European multinationals and their allies carry out in South America: it is hidden behind the mask of NGOs and the most hypocritical and paternalistic charity."

These events unfolded as part of the struggle of the Mapuche people (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg59**, also including a glossary of the Mapudungun vocabulary below), fighting against European colonisers more than 500 years (immediately before which they stalled and defeated the Inca Empire's southward push). Wallmapu, their historic territory, is cut in half by the nation-state borders of Argentina and Chile, so they cannot move freely around their native land. The Mapuche are also no stranger to forced police disappearances, including under democracy; such as José Huenante, detained September 2005 in the Chilean city Puerto Montt, never to be seen again.

Especially in light of the history of colonists from the U.K. (famously from Wales) emigrating to Argentina, we'd like to add some words to counter the historical amnesia so many of us seem to find ourselves in right now. Following the British-funded 'Conquest of the Desert' genocides (see below), the Argentine President donated 900,000 hectares to the British company Argentine Southern Land, to construct a railroad for the country's export system to better profit from the expropriation. **Today, the case is not atypical of Joseph "Joe" Lewis** (British business magnate among the 300 richest people on the planet), whose massive purchase on Patagonian land included the Hidden Lake, a Mapuche site of high significance, to which he subsequently closed access. Last summer, Mapuche fighters burned his excavators preparing a hydroelectric dam along the Río Escondido, on Lewis' private property, being built in cooperation with Edenor electric company, of which Lewis is the biggest stock owner. (That attack was also in solidarity with Facundo Jones Huala of the Cushamen community (see below), wanted for extradition to Chile over Mapuche land recuperation actions, in the end released only to be re-arrested and now awaiting transportation over the border to face 'terror' charges for arson on a colonist farm.)

Since 1991, Argentine Southern Land was acquired by the Bennetton family of Italy, where it produces 10% of the wool for fashion chain United Colors of Benetton, in addition to the mining, deforestation, transgenic soy plantations (see **Market Pressured to Temporarily Drop G.M. Product Lines After Contamination Campaign Claimed, Lombardy**)

and other extraction elsewhere on more than million hectares it owns in Argentine Patagonia (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg66**). The Chubut province near the Chilean border has become a focus point for landless indigenous workers who since 2015 have set up the Pu Lof community on unused rural tracts around the town of Cushamen (Mapuche territory for over 1,400 years, which Benetton now holds the deeds for), and has seen an explosion of violence from authorities intent on breaking the recuperation movement, with the first brutal mass raids ordered by Benetton in June 2016. (Among the dwellings, clothes and equipment torched by police have been stocks of organic autochthonous seeds; this is because Mapuche still preserve their seeds without genetic modification which stops multinationals from selling their own tailored stock and creating a dependence on copyrighted versions. Since the raids, others have pointed out Benetton's political relations with the Minister of Homeland Security, Patricia Bullrich.) A pamphlet distributed in Pontevedra (Spain) reminds us that "while exhibiting disgusting advertising where they show people of all colours and ethnicities smiling and so happy (but all following the racist and colonial stereotypes of Western civilisation, of course), [United Colors of Benetton] crush the Mapuche communities that try to recover their land, today bought by that company to pasture the 1,000s of sheep they have enslaved to produce wool."

Anarchists, for almost as long as they have called themselves such, have a history that in it's better moments has always included solidarity with anti-colonial insurgencies: while in 1850, in New Orleans, Joseph Déjacque (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg29**) dreamed of slave rebellions and the dissolution of racial boundaries, Louis Michel embodied these dreams quarter of a century later by joining her force with rebels of so-called New Caledonia and Algeria (see **The Matter of Knowing Who We Are**). Likewise today, as in other parts of the world, in Argentina anarchists and Mapuche find themselves side-by-side facing the enemy, as was the case when Diego Sebastián Petrisans and Leandro Sebastián Morel went to prison (with a third comrade of the Anarchist Black Cross of Buenos Aires forced underground) after Leandro robbed a T.V. production company owned by a host, media producer and businessman known for evicting Mapuche from their own land to build vast tourist complexes. Rather than an expression of an updated third-(fourth?)worldism, "allyship" (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg67**) or common Western fetish for indigenous culture (see **Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe/Q**), the facet we find vital in anarchist involvement in such struggles is the survival of other ways of being in this increasingly monocultural and totalitarian world, as imagination itself becomes an endangered species; and lessons we could learn along these lines from engaging with indigenous examples that Chilean agitators of Sin Banderas Ni Fronteras describe as "[o]ffensive actions of resistance that, combined with the propagation and implementation of ways of living and relationship modes contrary to those imposed by the state, capitalism and civilisation, build an antagonistic reality that preoccupies power and keeps it busy with its eradication, isolation and extermination."

October 20th, the Argentinian State announced what we had intuited already with heavy hearts; the body of Santiago had just been "found" (i.e. planted) in the icy waters of the Chubut River, 300 meters upstream from the place where he was seen

being captured, an area that had been raked multiple times by family and friends. "Santiago Maldonado who fought on the barricades of Chiloé [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg24**], defending the sea. Santiago Maldonado who fought for the immense southern land. Every time the strong Patagonian wind blows, he will be there. Whenever the rebels of the world try to storm the heavens, he will be there. Rest comrade, the sea, the land and the forests for which you gave your life are waiting to provide you shelter" (statement by comrades of the Ghiraldo Library). **They have taken the comrade away from us**, but we hope all that remains in their hands is the compost that will fertilise a thousand more rebellious roots, nourished by the ash of this genocidal, ecocidal system and its components. And indeed, within 24 hours of the expert's proclamation on the body, the municipal Casa de la Provincia in Río Negro was trashed and left with a banner for the freedom of Facundo Jones Huala, the Argentine Military Attaché's office facade in Montevideo (Uruguay) was badly fire damaged, and we imagine more by the time this reaches you...

In the broader context, (by surely conservative figures) in 2017 so far almost four people a week (largely indigenous) are killed worldwide defending the land, especially from mines, plantations, wild animal exploitation and infrastructure projects, and particularly in Latin America. Agribusiness has comparatively come to the fore compared to the composition of these figures in recent years, as industry demand grows for soy, palm oil, sugarcane and beef (which, besides the aforementioned wool, Argentina is famous for). **However also in the 'richest' countries, defenders of the earth are increasingly under the gun as the scramble for 'resources' heats up further;** for example during the Standing Rock mobilisation in the U.S.A. (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg16**) North Dakota legislators only narrowly decided against a bill allowing drivers to run over and kill protesters without being jailed (similar laws have in fact passed in other U.S. States in response to confrontational road, dock and airport blockades), while on its heels in that colonial territory 66-year-old James "Jim" Leroy Marker died in Florida in defense of the Withlacoochee River after firing on the protested Sabal Trail pipeline and its construction equipment and getting into a fatal high-speed chase by County Sheriffs. (He may have chosen the date and location to coincide with a call "to honor the anniversary of the 1973 Wounded Knee Stand-off on the Pine Ridge Reservation [ed. – see the companion piece to **Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation**] and to stop the pipeline from going in the ground through the wetlands and endangered species habitat of Halpata Tastanaki Preserve (a site named after a Seminole leader of the armed resistance that fought U.S. invasion of indigenous communities in the mid-1800s).")

Finally, just in these last days of autumn, young Mapuche warrior Rafael Nahuel fell to Argentinian police bullets on November 25th in Río Negro as the eviction of the mountain-top Lafken Winkul land recuperation, which he had travelled to join along with his aunt and cousin, ended in a shoot-out.

Enough being said, let's hear the words of imprisoned anarchist Marcelo (see **Rebels Behind Bars; Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo Villaruel Sepulveda**) about his relation with Santiago. "Since we were taken prisoner in the region dominated by the Argentine state [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg72**], our paths crossed. There were us, the prisoners in the province of Newken and there was Santiago, in the city of La Plata, next to us in a universe of active comrades, sharing complicity and standing in solidarity... It's been more than 9 years since our footsteps have crossed the continuous path of the brotherhood, this path that sets both of us on the same side of the trench[...] The rebellious and ancestral fire is incinerating the machines of predatory capital, the insurrectionist blood spilled from our fallen comrades is among our war rituals..."

On August 1st, members of the *Pu Lof* Mapuche community in resistance in the province Cushamen barricaded National Route 40, along with allies in solidarity. They cut off traffic in solidarity against the legal proceedings confronting *el Lonko* Facundo Jones Huala (for the second time). Minutes later, cars and trucks arrived carrying about thirty border police armed with rifles. The *peñis* (Mapuches) began throwing rocks, responding to the presence of the bastard forces of order. The Gendarmerie advances to the shots, burning the precarious houses and belongings of the *Lof*, forcing the occupiers to retreat across a river. **Santiago Maldonado (“Lechuga” [Lettuce] or “el Brujo” [the Witch-Doctor]) fell behind the rest.** Some of the inhabitants of the *Lof* saw that the Gendarmerie grabbed Santiago; others testified as to hearing the police say they “got one.”

Afterwards, images and testimony began to circulate about how Santiago was missing, and that it seemed the Gendarmerie had taken him away in a “unimog” all-terrain military vehicle. The authorities were silent through this whole process.

On Friday, August 4th, various anarchists and individuals in solidarity entered the seat of government in Chubut province, demanding Santiago’s return. The place was ripe for destruction. Computers, notebooks, windows, and decorations were all viciously destroyed, and fliers and graffiti were left behind referring to the repression in Cushamen.

On Monday, August 7th, a gathering was called in the Plaza del Congreso, bringing various organizations and groups together with Santiago’s family. The gathering ended up being quite large, and many comrades showed up. Enraged not only because of what had happened, but also because the political apparatus – getting ready for their elections – had been distributing fliers for their Leftist Front. On the same day, after the gathering, Entre Ríos street was cut off, and the occupiers threw rocks and firecrackers at the infantry, fending off the two city police and one National Congress guardsman who had been stationed nearby. Afterward, two police motorcycles were set ablaze. In the end, the group dispersed, without any arrests or injuries on our side.

On Friday, August 11th, marches and actions were coordinated throughout various parts of the country: Bolsón, Bariloche, Rosario, and Buenos Aires. In the capital, human rights groups (including a section of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the mothers of individuals disappeared during the period of dictatorship), gathered alongside family members and friends of Lechuga’s, with

more leftist organizations bringing together a “peaceful” gathering in the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the Pink House, the seat of government. In front of the multitude, one of Lechuga’s brothers read some of his writing, leaving his anarchist, anti-police position completely clear.

One of the things that makes us quite angry is the way these events have been used by political parties – the PO, the MST, the MAS socialist convergence, and Kirchnerist parties^[1] – as well as NGOs, and unions like the CGT [*General Confederation of Labor*], with its dark history during the Peronist period,^[2] involving the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance and para-police groups. They use partial images and histories of our comrade to give themselves a few more kernels of legitimacy in the middle of an electoral process. **The kidnapping of Lechuga is not a political campaign. These scavengers would never feel strange defending private property, the border police, or even the same governments that repress them and bury them in the misery of everyday life – because they themselves desire to obtain that same power, and exercise that same authority.** We have nothing to do with them, or with their conciliatory responses to our comrade’s kidnapping.

On Thursday the 17th, a march was called in Córdoba Capital, where a great multitude demanded that Santiago be returned, alive and whole. The police deployed a massive riot-control apparatus. That same night, in the early morning, some anonymous deployed a rudimentary device that burned out the doors at the entrance to the Association of Non-commissioned Officers of the National Gendarmerie in Córdoba. No one claimed responsibility. Days later, a national march against trigger-happy cops resulted in confrontations and destruction throughout the center of Córdoba. Later, various anarchist, platformist, and political spaces were raided, including a dining hall, as well as the homes of mothers whose children were murdered by the police. Here, they only left with posters, flags, and fliers that had to do with Santiago’s case (as well as the milk from the dining hall). A few people were detained, but they were released after a few hours.

On Thursday the 24th, the group H.I.J.O.S. (made up of children of the disappeared) and other leftist groups called for a gathering and march in the Plaza San Martín in La Plata. Quite a few people attended, including a black bloc

of anarchists. During the march, there was vandalism on some of the central streets of the city. The march ended in the same plaza where it had begun, across the street from the Buenos Aires Senate. Under the astonished gaze of several indignant citizens, the street was cut off, a well-placed truck was destroyed, and the senate was attacked with rocks and a pair of molotov cocktails, resulting in some destruction and burning the facade of the building. Two hours later, two individuals left large cans filled with naphtha^[3], burning two cars parked next to the senate. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. Several days later, the intelligence chief of the Buenos Aires police was fired.

In some of these gatherings and marches, as well as in the streets and universities, and above all on social networks, we have seen that the a majority of the public has empathized with Santiago, and a smaller part has supported violent actions. It is true that in Argentina, to speak of forced disappearances is to speak of the military dictatorship and of histories that have been engraved in social sensibility. The vast majority of politicians try to hide the continuation of the repressive apparatus – hide the similarities between the dictatorship and the current democratic government. Repression, torture, and forced disappearances never really ended...

We believe that it is necessary to expand this conflict. From the first moments, comrades and allies creatively demonstrated around the world, first in Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru, but then in the U.S., Spain, India, France, Syria, Colombia, Mexico, and many other corners of this worn-out planet. These demonstrations have spread not only the news of what happened to Lechuga, but the fact that solidarity must be internationalist and without borders other than the limits that we set for ourselves.

The Press Takes Aim & the State Pulls the Trigger

What to say about the news articles and journalistic investigations by mercenaries like Jorge Lanata, Mauro Viale, Eduardo



Feinmann, and other information lackeys in the press? They put forward the name of the Mapuche Ancestral Resistance (RAM, a separatist guerrilla group), crediting them with more than thirty actions from one day to the next, from flyering to the burning of ranches, the death of a border policeman in San Martin de los Andes, and the sale of weapons and drugs. They pass along images of possible future Santiago Maldonado's – individuals who could face the same fate – in Mendoza, Entre Rios, and Buenos Aires; they put together theories that Santiago was a hostage of the Mapuches, that he had died in an attack on a ranch, that he was never in the Lof, or that he was a simple artisan or hippy backpacker.

After the attack on the seat of government in Chubut, the press attributed the attack to a cell of the RAM, stating that the attack “alarmingly” took place two blocks from the obelisk, and that they went in shooting; but if we look at the place for two seconds through the photos that were released, we can see clearly that there were several circle-A signs painted up, and that the damage was not done by bullets. Their exaggerations really are limitless...

The state needs to vindicate its own authority – it needs to create internal enemies. The unemployment crisis and the general economic crisis have resulted in an emergent malaise that can be felt clearly in the streets^[4]; what could be better than blaming the economic collapse on non-Argentine students, like Jorge Lanata's news program argued? Or blaming the destruction of the formal economy on pirate disc vendors, like the América 24 news channel tried to do? What could be better than the president Mauricio Macri saying that the workers have to stop messing around with all of this about blocking roads, have to going over their bosses heads – because this discourages foreign investment?

Declarations from Patricia Bullrich (the Minister of National Security) have said that she won't allow the Gendarmerie to be crucified (“...I'm not going to throw the Gendarmerie under the bus...”), claimed that the Maldonado case is not a forced disappearance, and declared through clenched teeth that she thinks it's impossible that thirty border police would

conspire to kill and disappear someone. As she says, this police force is not the same as it was 40 years ago, always playing the same game of “bad dictatorship, good democracy [ed. – see *Who Is It?*].”

The Bullrich family has always known how to defend their ideological and economic interests. Adolfo Bullrich headed a business that auctioned land off after the disastrous Conquest of the Desert – a campaign pushed forward by the ten-president Avellanada and continued by Julio A. Roca, the goal of which was to annihilate the native peoples who lived in Patagonia, seize immense land holdings, reaffirm national sovereignty, and generate juicy business contracts with English and Welsh companies, as well as whoever wanted to invest. Esteban Bullrich, Patricia's brother, left his post as Minister of Education in order to stand for election. In an election ad, Esteban spoke of the positive changes that the Cambiemos government had generated during those months, stating “*We have put more kids in school, more pavement on the streets, and more young men in prison...*” Are these words surprising, coming from someone who defended the repressive murderer Luis Patti^[5] so that he could exercise his position in congress? He did declare that in a democracy, there is space for debate between different ideologies...

After the proposal for a week of action for Santiago went out over the internet, state security forces were put on alert – so much so that a senior official in the intelligence department of the federal police sent a document to the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, María Eugenia Vidal (of the center-right PRO party) ordering an increase in security and patrols in the streets. The document described possible attacks, and risks to individuals belonging to the security forces, infrastructure, and

buildings. The result was not only a visible increase in the number of police (in plazas, border police buildings, train stations, police precincts, and troubled neighborhoods), but that they brought out the shiny toys that we hadn't seen for a long while: Federal Police armored vehicles, water cannon trucks, and troop transport vehicles all over the place. Everything but the army in the streets.

This new escalation of repression that has been taking place – and will continue – in the streets of the Capital, demonstrates that the ministry of security, as well as the bosses of police “intelligence” intend to restrict all solidarity, rage, and the actions that were unleashed following Santiago's disappearance. Perhaps these sparks can bring us to break new limits...

In some of our spaces, their harassment is plainly visible. Now it's not just phone taps and cops following some comrades home, but investigative teams taking pictures, infantry trucks on the corner, and patrols coming and going.

All of this responds to a specific context. In some neighborhoods of the province of Buenos Aires, police have been stopping members of collectives to ask for their documents and check their belongings; the notable increase in patrols and police officers is not just an effort at control and surveillance, but also at the same time, an attempt to clean up the terrible image of both the border police and the cops. During Children's Day, border police brought trucks of toys to different schools and cafeterias – that is to say, they shamelessly repeated slogans of “solidarity” in the same places where they perform intelligence work, go in shooting, and carry out fierce repression. If their intelligence work was designed under the framework of Project X in the Kirchner epoch, when they built a database



31.08.17, Buenos Aires: headquarters of the “anti-terrorist” Federal Operations Special Group burns; after the demonstration the next day, the 35th Gendarmerie Battalion near met the same by molotovs, and still the revolt wasn't over...

following militants and organizations, now they've come out onto the field of play more than ever before, becoming one more shock force that the State can employ in its favor.

Of course, the law follows not far behind, not only with the reform to law 24.660 (which removes almost all prison benefits and temporary releases, giving more decisive power to the Penal Service), but also the increases in sentences, broadening legal definitions of illicit association, carrying weapons, and damage to private property.

Relationships Between Mapuches & Anarchists

We have seen that in the last couple years, some Mapuche communities have been leaving aside legalistic angles of struggle, and have decided to occupy the properties of large landholders and portions of state land. Machines have been burned, there have been coordinated attacks on various positions on single ranches – similar to what is going on in the Wallmapu on the Chilean side.

The media have taken it upon themselves to declare that all Mapuches belong to the RAM, or that the Mapuches who live in the Lof belong to the RAM, generating a perfect internal enemy. In reality, the RAM are nothing more than the abbreviation with which some Mapuches claim their actions in the Wallmapu in Argentina.

El Lonko Facundo Jones Huala is recognized as belonging to this Mapuche group. At the moment, he is detained in the prison at Esquel, where he spent 18 days on hunger strike, awaiting a presumed extradition to Chile. He has recognized the occurrence of a historic confrontation not only with the Argentine state, but the Chilean state as well, along with the corporations that have devastated indigenous territories without fear of reprisal, with the excuse of “progress” [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg11*]. **This is an ancestral struggle that has lasted more than 500 years. The RAM is only a small expression of this long struggle.**

Harassment and persecution not only by the forces of order, but also by the business owners and the media is disgusting. They try to justify both repression and the advance of neocolonialism. They throw out headlines alleging that the Mapuches are connected to the FARC [ed. – *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Marxist-Leninist guerrillas*], that they have military assault weapons, that they are “fake indians”, and many other idiocies.

For us as anarchists, it's impossible not to be angry with the ways that the state harasses, attacks, and disappears the



Left: 31.12.12, Police post totally burned, including state-of-the-art technology delivered the week before, at the Cardenal Samoré international mountain pass in the Andes (the only one open year-round) closing it to freight for two weeks. **Right:** 28.08.17, as the 'Luchsinger case' (see *Return Fire vol.1 pg67*) trial against 10 Mapuche opens, 29 forestry trucks in Los Ríos ('Chilean' Wallmapu) torched by arms-wielding fighters of Weichan Auka Mapu (Fight of the Rebel Territory); who incinerated 18 more in the two weeks before.

Mapuche, as well as the Qom^[6], the Wichí^[7], or the Guaraní^[8], not to mention the tribes living in the Amazon, who resist the advance of the machines and “human progress” understood as civilization. We share much with the Mapuche who are fighting in the south of the region, but there is also a chasm distancing us from them. Their forms of organization and the relationships that they have developed, involving themselves with nature and the land are a demonstration of their own, specific cosmivision. As anarchists, we recoil from their desire to advance and obtain their own Mapuche nation. We respect their rebel dignity, and will stand in solidarity, but we do not share in the totality of their struggle^[9].

No Demands on the State; Permanent Conflict Against Authority

We all desire that our comrade be returned alive, that he might follow whatever path he might desire. We know that the state is responsible for this disappearance, because that is one of the functions of persecution and the “extermination” of the “disturbing elements” that impede the normal functioning of society. For the same reason, we cannot demand anything of our persecutors. They are responsible for the disappearances for trafficking, connections between the narcos and the police, executions of youth in our neighborhoods at the hands of the cops, the approval of laws raising sentences, playing with the lives of prisoners, responsible for the application of new technologies for social control, for the destruction of natural territories in order to put up concrete walls and plantations of soy or GMO corn – everything that turns the wheels of capitalist progress.

We feel that they have tried to depoliticize our comrade. They have attempted to deny his anarchist convictions, and they have tried to hold him up as a slogan for one more political campaign. On one hand, Cristina Kirchner and her bootlickers seem to have very short memories: They talk about Santiago, but they evaporate when we bring up Julio

López. Although Hebe de Bonafinni (one of the founders of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo) might have said that López was a jailer and that Santiago was a social activist, she said it to defend Kirchnerism. And what's more, it's a lie – López was a carpenter and was disappeared in 2006 because he was going to testify against Miguel Osvaldo Etchecolatz, a leader of the forces of repression during the dictatorship. López' disappearance demonstrates that even after 15 years, the military still has plenty of power. Nor do they want to talk about Luciano Arruga – a youth from the marginal neighborhood Lomas de Mirador, who was kidnapped, murdered, and buried as a John Doe in the la Chacarita cemetery, because he refused to steal for the police. Nor do they want to remember Cristian Ibáñez, who was detained by the police only to later appear to have “killed himself” in his cell in a police precinct in Jujuy, or Marcelo Cuellar, who was murdered in the town of Libertador General San Martín in 2003, at a march following Ibáñez' murder – both were militants with the Combative Classist Current. They don't want to talk about Carlos Fuentealba, killed by police repression in Neuquén during a labor organizers' roadblock of Route 22nd in 2007, or Juan Carlos Erazo, killed in Mendoza in 2008 following a brain abscess resulting from an injury when he was hit by a rubber bullet and tear gas, during a factory takeover where he worked. They want to forget that on June 17th, 2010, Diego Bonefoi was murdered by police in Bariloche, shot in the back of the head. On the next day, the neighborhood organized a protest, and two more youths were killed in the resulting police repression: Nicolás Carrasco and Sergio Cárdenas. On October 20th of the same year, Mariano Ferreyra – a militant in the Workers' Party – was shot twice and killed by strikebreakers from the Railway Union, during a protest organized by workers whose jobs at Roca Railways in Avellanada had been outsourced. **During the Kirchner era, indigenous peoples have had the same fortune.** The indigenous community member Javier Chocobar, part of a Diaguita community in

Tucumán, was resisting displacement alongside other members of the community. On October 12th, 2009, an ex-police member in service of the landowners drove in and started shooting, killing and injuring other inhabitants of the community. On November 23th, 2010, in Formosa, some indigenous Qom members of the community La Primavera blocked a road to reclaim their lands. The police repressed them violently, murdering two members of the community, Sixto Gómez and Roberto López...

This has not only taken place under Kirchnerism. All governments are of one color, and have dozens of repressive murders on their hands. Further back there are Víctor Choque, Teresa Rodríguez, Mauro Ojeda, Francisco Escobar, Aníbal Verón, Carlos Santillán, Oscar Barrios, the youths Maximiliano Tasca, Cristian Gómez, Adrián Matassa, Miguel Bro, Javier Barrionuevo, Petete Almirón, Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki, and so many more who have been beaten, tortured, disappeared, and murdered by the forces of order – in neighborhoods, in police precincts, in psychiatric hospitals, in brothels and jails.

Their hands are bloody – soaked with the blood of the marginalized, the blood of illegals, the blood of rebels. Passivity is not an option: it's time to demand vengeance. Vengeance against the executioners, and vengeance for the life of misery they have imposed. Vengeance for their constant violence. There has never been peace, with so many dead, and we know who is responsible. We know their names, their titles, and their intentions. They try to call us infiltrators, to call us violent, and we reply: **WE CAN BE WORSE STILL...**

1. ed. – A political group formed by supporters of the late Néstor Kirchner, president of Argentina from 2003 to 2007; and of his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, president 2007-2015.

2. ed. – "Peronismo, largely the invention of [Juan Domingo] Peron's brilliant wife, Eva, was the nearest thing to perfect fascism that ever existed. Forget about all the propaganda and foolishness that has encrusted around the word "fascist." Forget about Nazi-fascism and the clerical fascism of Franco [ed. – see **Who Is It?**] and [António de Oliveira] Salazar [dictator of Portugal 1932-1968]. By fascism I mean the true essence of that was a revolutionary movement – or left-wing fascism. True pure fascism, as envisioned by Mussolinin [ed. – see **Who Is It?**], grew out of the militant left-wing of Italian Socialism. It was an attempt to impose the Social Democratic program through dictatorship and armed force. The movement dispensed with the sterile positivism and evolutionism of Orthodox Marxism, substituting romantic emotionalism, extreme nationalism, a cult of the will and of the "man of action." The goal was to nationalize industry and subordinate all classes to the needs of the State. The working classes were to benefit from this revolution – but only so

long as they remained subservient to the Fascist State. Mussolini's problem was that he never had the support of the working class and thus had to turn to the traditional middle classes. Thus much of his revolution only remained on paper. This was not the situation which faced the Perons. More than 15 years before they took power, the generals smashed the powerful anarcho-syndicalist trade unions and only small remnants remained. [...] Eva Duarte-Peron was able to build a labour movement by filling an organizational vacuum (and where necessary smashing her weakened opponents). Thus Peronism (Argentine fascism) had a solid base among the workers. With prodding from the ever-energetic Evita, the movement nationalized the banks, insurance companies, mines and railroads. As a result, Argentina had probably the largest state-capitalist sector outside of a Stalinist regime. Wages were forced up by decree and a host of social benefits introduced for Los Descamisados (literally "the shirtless ones," the working class followers of the Perons). Even the Church was attacked. The "anti-imperialist" game was played to an excess, alternating between violent anti-Americanism and anti-British sentiment. The foreigner was made the scapegoat for all of Argentina's problems" (Larry Gambone). The Peróns gave their name to the political movement known as Peronism (a political phenomenon that draws support from both the political left and political right), which in present-day Argentina is represented mainly by the Justicialist Party.

3. ed. – A flammable oil containing various hydrocarbons, obtained by the dry distillation of organic substances such as coal, shale, or petroleum.

4. ed. – Rising prices for transport, electricity, gas and food as well as austerity measures are a part of this, having provoked a general strike in April.

5. ed. – Argentine politician and a former senior police officer responsible for various tortures and murders from the 1970's onwards, now jailed. In 2008 while Patti's actions during the 1970's were still under formal investigation the Supreme Court of Argentina ruled that he should still be allowed to take his seat in Congress.

6. ed. – The Toba people, also known as the Qom people, are one of the largest indigenous groups in Argentina, and historically inhabited the region known today as 'the Pampas' as well as parts of Bolivia and Paraguay.

7. ed. – The Wichí are a large group of peoples ranging about the headwaters of the Bermejo River and the Pilcomayo River, in Argentina and Bolivia.

8. ed. – The traditional range of the Guaraní is in present-day Paraguay between the Uruguay River and lower Paraguay River, the Misiones Province of Argentina, southern Brazil, and parts of Uruguay and Bolivia.

9. ed. – We don't know enough about the Argentine context to say, but for sure there are Mapuche in struggle in Chile who do not want to erect an 'independent' nation-state, Mapuche or otherwise (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg68**, not to mention problems equating indigenous concepts of place to a possessive, territorial, noun-based language like English); obviously alongside others who do, comprising a very heterogeneous movement. Hence there is no single 'Mapuche struggle'. In Argentina, Isabel Huala, mother of

the aforementioned Facundo Jones Huala, asserts that "I'm not Argentine or Chilean. I'm Mapuche. I am pre-existing to both States. I do not want to build another nation." Albeit spoken from a very different context, we find it interesting to think over the words of one anarchist in Barcelona: "There's certainly an anarchism as a radical extreme of liberalism, in which rights are purely an individual affair, and therefore questions like culture and language – these are collective realities, realities that don't make sense on an individual scale – don't have any importance; and that strain of anarchism in my mind takes a fairly Eurocentric read of national liberation movements, only understanding them in a European or Western context in which national liberation movements are always nationalist and always seek the creation of a new nation-state. Whereas a vision that focuses more on cultural and linguistic self-determination would realise that nationalist movements also destroy that self-determination [through the homogenizing force inherent to all State-building projects.] Such a view would also take into account various anti-colonial struggles that were not fighting for a new State but that were fighting against the imposition of the State (as a Western artifact). And you could also consider that probably the four most revolutionary, multitudinary examples of anarchism in practice would be Cataluña/Aragón 1936, Machinovchina in 1919, the Balkans commune in 1903 and the Shinmin commune in Manchuria in 1929; three out of four of those arose in part because anarchists took part in an anti-statist, anti-nationalist way. So there's certainly a rich history there and a lot of room to maneuver that doesn't put us in the dead-end of nationalism." More strongly, another comrade from the same territory describes the more 'radical' version of this liberalism: "Starting from the fact that "every nation and all cultural identity is an artificial social construct of domination," there is a cosmopolitanism straight out of a catalog that, under the mask of a sort of fictional "nihilism" (culture is domination, ergo, deny culture, we deny civilisation completely, forgetting that our own anarchist ideas and nihilism itself are cultural constructs and fruit of that same civilisation) plays the game of domination without even stopping to reflect on it. It is common to find among anarchists, especially those anarchists born in the so-called "First World" and in countries or regions where there have been no centrifugal tensions, that slogans, in principle valid and legitimate, such as "Neither Homeland nor Borders" or "The Poor Have No Country", become an apology for a sort of "citizenship of the world" more false than a plastic coin. I ask all these people: what is more cosmopolitan than neoliberal globalisation, cultural homogenization, the disappearance of identities and cultures, the ways of being, existing and acting in a territory, and the imposition of what I would call "substitutes for uprooting"; that is, this vulgar culture of emptiness, where no-one knows, understands or relates to their territory and environment because of the lack of a worldview that allows them to understand and attack their conditions of existence from their own context; where the same products are consumed here as in China, with the same canned flavors; we speak the same colonising languages, and we think of the same terms and the same frameworks that have been instilled in us all, without even asking ourselves where all that comes from: beyond repeating that "everything is a construct" and conforming to that?" (The Unbearable Folly of Being: a Critique of Referendums & Anarchism).

WHO IS IT?

[ed. – This text dates back to the early 2000's; since then, if anything we have seen an intensification of the totalitarian aspects that democracy exhibits, for example in the wave of expansionist wars the Western powers have undertaken to install regimes (itself nothing new, but with an more explicit emphasis on the compulsory moral character of democratic values than they permitted themselves when they still had to compete with the Communist powers for an image of liberty; in the age of 'anti-terrorism', anything to endow the cowed mass with an illusion of protection or integrity against the phantasmal threat is justified as de facto 'democratic'). For example the previous Prime Minister of the U.K. passed laws giving police powers to apply for court orders to limit the "harmful activities" of individuals creating a "threat to the functioning of democracy" (more specifically citing those whose activities aim at a "purpose of overthrowing democracy"); bans include publication on the web and social media or in print anything not submitted to the police for approval, and power to close premises where 'extremists' seek to influence others. (One could point out that these measures initially target Muslim cultural groups or others 'at risk of radicalisation', while at the same time seeing 'anti-hate' discourse already levelled against anarchists and other liberationists, as in the U.S. to designate anti-police violence, or the trial (still) pending against comrades in Belgium (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg68**) for actions and propaganda against 'victimised' Eurocrats...)

However, it's important to mention one difference today; **for the first time in decades, the elite consensus over the neo-liberal strategy of capital (free trade agreements, de-regulation, etc.) which has dictated the world system politically and economically since the second Great World Slaughter appears to be crumbling.** But it's probably too soon to say where these cracks actually lead (for example, although not limited to the U.S. – the U.K. exit from the European Union being one obvious correlate – the failure to resolve this tension is perhaps personified for many by U.S. President Donald Trump, who mouths off against global trade to win votes but has yet to prove himself willing or capable of changing this very basis of U.S. wealth; and despite press and leftist alarmism – amounting to little more than a revision of the authoritarianism of the Obama presidency before him – and his proven willingness to grant the resurgent right license to target social movements, is ultimately more an expression of American white supremacist democratic traditions than 'fascism').

This was written in the deathly silence before the wave of insurrections finally broke through to the Global North (France 2005, Greece 2008, England 2011, U.S.A. 2014, etc.) Today the system must overcome more visible social crises than the '90s years that this article surely

germinates in. But we could also say that despite the legitimacy the figures of the banker, the cop and the politician have lost, **it is precisely democracy that has rejuvenated that system in country after country** via people's enchantment with the new political parties that rose from the ashes of abandoned self-organised forms coalesced during those uprisings or movements; a recuperation aided in some places by some anarchists misplaced promotion of so-called 'direct democracy' (see **'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'**). We would do well at such moments to remember how alone we stood against this democratic totalitarianism in the days before austerity or whatever other flash-points, because this is both the place referenced in this text, and the place we are returned to in the places where passing anarchist influence in moments of rupture has again waned.

Finally, we join the author/s in emphasising the falseness of the dichotomy between dictatorship and democracy; the latter has been swift to resort to welcoming the former when situations get out of hand (Franco and Pinochet, both mentioned below, both served democratic governments in militarily vanquishing rebellions before coming to power as autocrats), and comrades of countries that have transitioned from dictatorship (including but not limited to Greece, Indonesia, most of Latin America, etc.) frequently point out the continuation of one in the other; see our ending chronology...]

“And that reminds me,” [the driver said,] “you better get out soon[...] I got orders wherever there's a family not moved out – if I have an accident – you know, get too close and cave the house in a little – well, I might get a couple of dollars. And my youngest kid never had no shoes yet.”

“I built it with my own hands. Straightened old nails to put the sheathing on. Rafters are wired to the stringers with baling wire. It's mine. I built it. You bump it down – I'll be in the window with a rifle. You even come too close and I'll pot you like a rabbit.”

“It's not me. There's nothing I can do, I'll lose my job if I don't do it. And look – suppose you kill me? They'll just hang you, but long before you're hung there'll be another guy on the tractor, and he'll bump the house down. You're not killing the right guy.”

“That's so,” said tenant said. “Who gave you orders? I'll go after him. He's the one to kill.”

“You're wrong. He got his orders from the bank. The bank told him: 'Clear those people out or it's your job.'”

“Well, there's a president of the bank. There's a board of directors. I'll fill up the magazine of the rifle and go into the bank.”

The driver said, “Fellow was telling me the bank gets orders from the east. The orders were: 'Make the land show profit or we'll close you up.'”

“But where does it stop? Who can we shoot? I don't aim to starve to death before I kill the man that's starving me.”

“I don't know. Maybe there's nobody to shoot. Maybe the thing isn't men at all. Maybe, like you said, the property's doing it. Anyway, I told you my orders.”

“I got to figure,” the tenant said. “We all got to figure. There's some way to stop this. It's not like lightening or earthquakes. We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change.” The tenant sat in his doorway, and the driver thundered his engine and started off, tracks falling and curving, harrows combing, and the phalli of the seeder slipping into the ground.

Across the door-yard the tractor cut, and the hard, foot-beaten ground was seeded field, and the tractor cut through again; the uncut space was ten feet wide. And back he came. The iron guard bit into the house-corner, crumbled the wall, and wrenched the little house from its foundation so that it fell side-ways, crushed like a bug. And the driver was goggled and a rubber mask covered his nose and mouth. The tractor cut a straight line on, and the air and the ground vibrated with its thunder.

The tenant man stared after it, his rifle in his hand. His wife was beside him, and the quiet children behind. And all of them stared after the tractor.”

– *The Grapes of Wrath*

When one speaks of totalitarianism, thought runs immediately to a form of implacable domination that has historically been embodied in the figure of a single dictator. Hitler the *Fuhrer* [Germany, 1934-1945], Mussolini the *Duce* [Italy, 1922-1943], Franco the *Caudillo* [Spain, 1939-1975], Stalin the Little Father [Russia, 1922-1953], Ceausescu the Leader [Romania, 1965-1989], Mao the Great Helmsman [China, 1949-1976], Pinochet the *generalissimo* [Chile, 1972-1990]: all are examples of dictators from a not too distant past that is nevertheless considered difficult to repeat. In the course of the past few years we have been experiencing the end of the era of individual dictatorship as this form of power receives nearly unanimous condemnation. And if in a few parts of the world, regimes still survive that are led by strongmen, the tendency to replace them with modern democracies is taking hold without much dispute. **The Fuhrer, the Duce and their like have had to give up their place to somewhat disembodied, cold systems of domination, without surprise, from which the human element is almost completely banished. But a dictatorship – a totalitarian system – does not necessarily have to be led by a single individual to be**

considered such. One can consider any regime in which power is concentrated absolutely into the hands of a group of people who, thus, come to have control over all aspects of everyone's existence to be such. From this one can deduce that the most important element in a totalitarian system is not so much who holds the power as **how it is exercised.** It does not matter what reasons such a system adopts to justify absolute control, whether racial purity or the development of markets. It isn't even particularly important whether control is secured violently through the presence of tanks in the street or gently by means of media anesthesia. It is the inexorable application of this control to all aspects of life that counts, the fact that it leaves no loophole, it gives no possibility of escape.

Thus, democracy itself is also a form of dictatorship – certainly less obvious, but not for this less effective, quite the contrary – that must impose its values in every field on all individuals and social classes for its own self-preservation. From this perspective, many consider it the most perfect totalizing system. The main reason that it has succeeded in replacing the old and obsolete forms of power is that it is not merely one of the various forms power can assume; democracy corresponds to the very essence of capitalism, to the normal functioning of market society in its expansion. Within the marketplace, social classes don't exist; there are only "free and equal" consumers. This "freedom" and "equality" covers a basic role in the gathering of consensus, that consensus which represents the highest virtue of the democratic system in the eyes of its supporters.

In fact, the classic totalitarian regimes are based on an exercise of violence that is, paradoxically, a profound sign of weakness. The conditions of life that are imposed are intolerable – everyone knows this – and it is up to the forces for the maintenance of order to materially obstruct the realization of a different life, the possibility of which still remains as the conscious aspiration of the majority of people. **On the other hand, in democratic systems the very possibility of a different life is to be eradicated.** To maintain order, the democratic state does not take out its

cudgels except under very specific circumstances; rather it uses the organs of information. These don't leave bruises on the skin, but preventatively nullify all awareness, extinguish every desire, placate every tension; the individual dissolves and her *[sic]* alienation from the world becomes irreconcilable.

Freedom is simply self-determination. It is the choice each individual makes concerning his existence and the world in which she lives. But a choice in a situation in which there is nothing to choose, because conditions determined by others limit the situation, is a choice only in name. Thus, a regime that represses challenges with blood is denounced as totalitarian; it hinders different choices. But what can one say about a regime in which no significant social tumult ever breaks out, a regime that has nothing to hinder because it does not even provide for the possibility of different choices. As someone has said, *"The most perfect police state has no need for police."* A decisive aspect of the totalitarian form – the single party – can express itself completely now even within the western political systems.

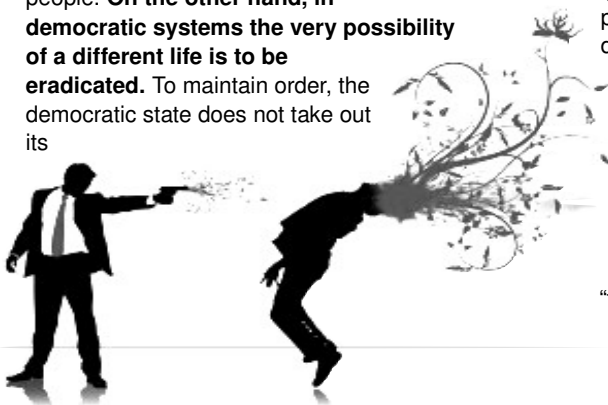
Contemporary political analysts themselves are forced to admit that when one takes the economic bonds and the increasingly clear agreement on the principles of the market economy between the left and the right into account, the discourse and the programs of the great parties overlap more and more. Instead of presenting objectives that obviously differ from one another, developed through the use of opinion polls, the great governing parties have reached the point where they no longer divide on specific objectives...

These considerations no longer succeed in rousing amazement, expressing a situation that has in fact become familiar. Among the apologists for the totalitarianism of the market, this familiarity loses all shame and becomes inescapable. In his last book celebrating global capitalism, journalist Thomas Friedman – columnist for the New York Times, winner of two Pulitzer Prizes – does not hide his satisfaction in establishing that political choice has been reduced to Pepsi against Coca Cola – slight nuances of taste, slight political variants, but never any deviation from the respected assumption of the rules of gold, those of the main street, the multiplicity of parties, which has been proclaimed as a sure sign of democratic health because it supposedly guarantees the possibility of choice, thence of "freedom", is seen ever more clearly for what it is: a competition between identical things.

Today more than ever before, politics is action as an end in itself, particularly in its parliamentary form in which the shuffling of people and things serves no other purpose than that of disguising not only the uselessness of the work, but also its essential unity. The numerous political parties that throng into the parliament today are the "natural" heirs of the different factions that battled inside the old single dictatorial party. As in the case of the factions, the various parties share the same vision of the world, the same values, the same methods. Only the details differentiate them.

Totalitarianism has met with almost universal condemnation everywhere, and yet every day we can see how democracy is just another form of totalitarianism. And one of the worst. A modern democracy is rarely shaken by revolt. **Democracy has taken hold as the political system most impermeable to the risk of revolt.** Even if such a revolt managed to emerge, it would have difficulty fueling the passions of individuals since it no longer has a role in the collective imagination. And this still doesn't take into account that even in such a hopeful case, the wrath generated would not find anyone against which to direct itself, precisely because in democratic systems power is not embodied in a human being, but is represented by an entire social system.

It goes without saying that the parliamentary and union institutions never furnish the governed individuals with adequate means for making their claims, while dissatisfaction – even when generalized – leads in the best of cases to the formation of some current of opposition. When there is not a figure in a position to polarize the totality of the opposition against itself in an enduring manner – precisely when there is no dictator – in a situation where a governing functionary becomes the object of a widespread challenge, the normal interplay of institutions can even act to eliminate him *[sic]* in order to mollify at least a part of the discontent. The lack of a king whose head can be cut off, of a strong authoritarian figure capable of drawing popular hatred onto itself, in other words of someone to whom we can attribute the responsibility for the exercise of power, constitutes the genuine great bulwark in defense of democratic totalitarianism. In the old and caricatured dictatorships, power had the moustache of Hitler or the jaw of Mussolini, and it could be seen goose-stepping in the street or wearing the black shirt. But today



in the modern democracies, **who is power?** And the aim of the question is not to identify the particular people who exercise power, which is still possible on some level, but to attribute the responsibility for the existence that we lead to them.

Over and over again it is said that today there is a single social system managed by people who are mere cogs in a machine, petty functionaries who cover most administrative roles. The very concept of responsibility comes to lose all meaning. Responsibility is the possibility of foreseeing the effects of one's behavior and changing this on the basis of such foresightedness. But the cog in a machine has no foresight; it has no need of foresight; it can never do anything but spin. Therefore, it is no longer possible to attribute the fault for an action to anyone, even if the action was most aberrant.

Let's look at an example taken from the realm of what is commonly called "judicial errors". Consider a man who has been sentenced to prison for life but actually did not commit the crime of which he was accused. He is placed under investigation, arrested, incarcerated, tried, sentenced and kept segregated for the rest of his life. Who is responsible for all this? In the old totalitarian systems, the response was much too simple. Everyone would have seen the unfortunate fellow dragged away, condemned and locked up by the hired thugs of the dictator who would have been considered responsible for the injustice perpetrated. In modern democracies, on the other hand, no one is held responsible. The police officer who arrested him is not responsible since he was limited to carrying out orders from someone else. Nor can we blame the prosecutor although he asks for the sentence, because he does not decree it; this is done by someone else. Even the judges are not at fault since they have to make a decision on the basis of evidence presented to them by someone else and then apply the provisions of a penal code compiled by someone else. Finally, one cannot blame the guard, who as the last link in this chain, is certain to have a clean conscience unlike someone else. Yet that man finds himself there in prison, and it is his body that is enclosed behind bars, not that of someone else. Thus, in the dictatorships that once existed the fact that power was embodied in one man made him responsible along with his underlings, but in modern democracy the distribution of power through out the social apparatus removes responsibility from everyone without distinction.

This exists as a social reality that is quite tangible, concrete and above all tragic. It is able to grind up human life without anyone being blamed. And if this happens when human responsibility is indisputable, we



(Not-so-wild)fires rage this September across North America's Pacific coast

can imagine what would happen when other factors can be planned.

Here is another example. Numerous "experts" have had to agree that the origins of the huge storms that periodically strike the coasts of the United States and eastern Asia are undoubtedly found in climactic changes brought about by human activity. On the other hand, in the face of the series of earthquakes that shook the entire planet in the summer of 1999, the experts thought it good to reassure public opinion that in this case at least the responsibility lies elsewhere, in the unfathomable workings of nature. This may be true, but whatever they say about the causes, they fail to consider the effects of these cataclysms. If seismic tremors escape human control, we are facing a natural fact in which we are unable to intervene and to which we can only submit; but when these tremors destroy the modern cities of Greece causing deaths and injuries while leaving the acropoli intact, then we are facing a social question. To build houses, apartments, entire cities, using building techniques and city planning projects intended to bring the highest level of economic profit and social control without considering even the most elementary safety precautions cannot be considered among the inborn human characteristics.

In the end, who is responsible for the thousands of deaths on the job? Who is at fault for poisoning nature? Who do we hold accountable for the wars, the massacres, the deaths of millions of people? Is it possible to exit from this dense fog?

In a famous essay entitled "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship", which took a polemic that arose from the trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann as its starting point, Hannah Arendt recalled that the principle argument of the defense was that Eichmann had been a mere cog, but regardless of whether the defendant is incidentally a functionary, he is in fact accused because **a functionary remains a human individual.** In order to clear the field of a confusionism that could only serve self-interest, the writer invites one to

consider the functioning of wheels and cogs as a global support to a collective undertaking, rather than to speak in the customary manner of obedience to leaders. In this light one would never have to ask those who collaborated and obeyed "why did you obey?" but "why did you give support?" If these observations don't minimally shake up the conscience of anyone who finds themselves reading them today, naturally it is because they refer to persons who served a dictatorship of the classical type. Under Nazism – Hannah Arendt tells us – all those who collaborated with the regime were equally responsible. When power is embodied in one man, the Man himself is responsible for it as well as the "black shirt", as the partisans who shot the adolescent "black shirts" without posing themselves too many ethical questions well knew. On the other hand, when power has no name or surname, no single person is more responsible than any other. Thus, the very people who justify the shooting of a 16-year-old "black shirt" are horrified, at the same time, by the violent death of a personage of the democratic state.

But were these young "black shirts" of yesterday actually more responsible than the president of the United States for rendering our existence intolerable? **We can't get rid of the thought that personal responsibility persists not only under the Nazi dictatorship but under the democratic one as well. It doesn't nullify the responsibility of its functionaries. If it dilutes this responsibility, it does so to disguise it, to render it impalpable, invisible to our eyes.** In the threadbare dialogue with which dominant thought has entertained itself for decades now, responsibility is said



14.06.17, London, U.K.: Grenfell flats, after repeated legal threats to the residents who warned likelihood of fire

to have gone through the same shipwreck that is supposed to have made History, Meaning, Reality sink forever. All one needs to do is stop listening to this chattering for a moment and here is what one would see: these alleged shipwrecks that never were such reappearing.

All discourse that sets out to compare human life to the functioning of a machine, in that unrelenting process of making the individual disappear, omits one thing: individuals are not cogs, they are human beings. They were human animals under the Nazi dictatorship and are such under that of the democratic state as well. The difference between a cog – which is a mere piece of metal – and a human being should be evident. A person is always in a position to discern and choose. If this is not so now, if one has indeed become a mere cog, this would be further confirmation of the totalizing and totalitarian reality in which we find ourselves unable to live, and of the urgent necessity of its overthrow. In any case, the social system in which we live is not an inherent aspect of the world; it is a historical project. We are not free to decide whether or not we are born into it, **but we can decide whether and how to live with it.** From the moment we accept taking on one of its roles, participating in its administration, we accept the responsibilities implicit in this. Being easily interchangeable particles of a very complex system does not free us from our responsibilities, because we could have chosen to refuse that system. Thus, even in this case one cannot excuse herself by saying that he only obeyed, that she only followed the current, that he only did what everyone else did. Because before obeying, before following the current, before imitating others, a human being poses herself, must pose himself, a question: would I consider it appropriate to do this? And then she must answer herself. Just like the Germans of whom Hannah Arendt spoke – we too are in the situation of having to choose whether to give our support or at least our consent to this social organization or not. Once again choice comes into play. In the myth of Er, Plato makes the destiny of each person depend on the choice each one makes of their model for life: “There was nothing necessarily preordained in life because each person had to change according to the choice she made.” Now, we can choose to give our contribution to the maintenance of this world. Or else we can choose to withhold it. In either case, we make a choice for which we alone are responsible, not someone else. If it is true that “the original choice is always present in each subsequent choice”, then we must also know how to accept the consequences of our actions. All of us, no-one excluded.

“Democracy is not something supernatural, something far from our selves. It’s our daily life. It’s the way we describe the cultural poverty of the modern mega-cities; the emptiness, the poverty, the loneliness, the alienation. Today, democracy receives proud laudations by ‘inflated’ politicians, ‘firm’ prosecutors, ‘uncorrupted’ cops, ‘truth-loving’ journalists, ‘charity activist’ wealth owners. And is now the time that we have to strip democracy from its ‘sanctity’ and throw it where it deserves: in the cesspool of history. And it’s now that we have to finish with this alienation that submits subconsciously the illusions – the illusion of the ‘most perfect’ regime in history, the illusion of normality, equality and peace.”

– December 6th (see *Return Fire vol.2 pg98*)

“Carl Schmitt, the influential German political theorist, jurist, and unrepentant Nazi whose work was later taken up by the neoliberals at the University of Chicago, said that government was not a monopoly on violence, but a monopoly on decision. This seems true. In fact, the State permits and depends on private violence in the form of patriarchy, racism, employment conditions, fascist street gangs, and so on, in order to maintain itself. What the State requires, in order to maintain power, is the prerogative to decide, in increasingly miniscule spheres of life, what is allowed and what isn’t; to decide the course of the country and *post facto* legitimate and regulate the initiatives taken by the capitalists. And when some social power contests the reigning order, the State must be involved in the resolution. The pacifists are wrong when they say that violence is the government’s strong suit. If they ruled through violence they would never have legitimacy. In fact, the government’s strong suit is communication. It is to occupy the central position, the role of mediator and protagonist, in any decision. It will make itself feared if it has to, but above all it survives by making itself heard and making itself necessary, to the point where people cannot imagine a solution to a social problem that is not tailored first and foremost to the needs of state. This is exactly why [anarchists] refuse to make demands. We will not dialogue with the State, we will not sit down to chat with Capital. We will not tell them what we want because they already know: we want them to die. [...] The police know that we propose solutions to their violence because they use the literature seized from our homes as evidence in the trials against us. The politicians know we envision a world without their authority because we talk about it in the communiqués that accompany the bombs placed outside their houses. The journalists know we criticize their control of culture and information because they fancy themselves investigators and we put these texts for free on the internet. And what they all know is precisely what they refuse to say in those embarrassing moments when they must admit that we exist: they have no place in our future. We are going to destroy them.”

– *The Logic of Not Demanding*

DEMOCRACY'S DISCONTENTS

19.11.17, Viña del Mar, Chile: *Street blockade on the voting day for the first round in the Presidential Elections.* “Each Forest cut, each Lake and River that dries, each Hill devastated, every species that is extinct; each one of the *Cabros* that falls into the trap, who are repressed and beaten by the police and live through the abyss that is prison; every *Peñi* and *Lamgjen* beaten, tortured and killed in *Wallmapu* [ed. – see *We Can Be Worse Still*]; each Woman abused by a priest, each Child violated and killed in the youth detention centres... each, and more of these same miseries that are endorsed by the violence and the very existence of the state, they are also the miseries that are guaranteed to those who believe in and perpetuate democracy.”

18.10.17, Santiago de Compostela, Spain: *An early-morning molotov is launched against the residence of the president of the Xunta de Galicia, currently occupied by the president of the PP (ruling Popular Party, directly set up by the fascist regime during the transition to democracy to retain the old guard). The same night, three ATMs are also torched, as is another one dawn the following day. The first wave of attacks coincides with a day called in all Galicia to demonstrations about the recent wave of over 50 concurrent fires in the Galician and Asturian mountains (the worst for years in these ‘green deserts’ of eucalyptus/pine monoculture forestry, itself already an industrial disaster and plan of Franco’s regime to turn the region’s ecology into a sacrifice zone). The PP maintain very close ties with the paper-pulping company ENCE, the main responsible for much of the Iberian Northwest monoculture; including the marriage of the much-hated ENCE plant in Pontevedra’s director to the Deputy Director General of Environmental Coordination of the Department of Environment, Territory and Infrastructure of the Xunta de Galicia. This PP president had just extended the life of the ENCE plant another 60 years...*

July 2016, Sydney, Australia: “Over the past two months some anarchists around Sydney mounted a campaign against politics and the democratic process. This election takes place in a period of historic disillusionment with the political spectacle and the politicians who represent it, and never before have so many parties been on offer, to direct that mistrust back into the electoral process. We reject this process in its entirety. Elections are a charade to confuse us about where power lies, and how things can be

VEGANISM: WHY NOT

– an anarchist perspective

changed. With the following petty acts of anti-political sabotage, we draw a line. Thousands of anti-electoral posters were pasted up throughout Sydney. Hundreds of anti-political slogans were painted across the city. A dozen banners were tied to highway overpasses. Political advertising of every party was vandalised, or taken down and later burnt. Party activists caught spreading political propaganda were confronted, harassed and sometimes relieved of their material. Unlike every political party we do not measure success based on opinion polls or ballots.”

18.06.13, Paris, France: “A week after the murder of a comrade^[*] in Paris by fascists, a week after the ever-so-democratic police raid [against undocumented people] in Barbès... a bank ATM burned[...] the window of the Pré St-Gervais Socialist Party section shattered by blows, [the headquarters of the Left Front] completely covered with tags. [...] Neither democracy nor fascism!”

* ed. – Clément Méric, militant syndicalist and anti-fascist, beaten to death by two neo-nazis

31.03.13, Aceh Tamiang, Indonesia: “[W]e burned down 3 buildings owned by the Major of Aceh Tamiang, Hamdan Sati. [...] We have no citizenship because we are borderless. We are the angry ones who light the fire of freedom.”

17.06.12, Athens, Greece: *In the early evening of the election day, around ten people enter a polling station and burn the ballot box. Two police officers guarding the polling station are attacked and have to be taken to hospital.* “Everything around us seems to unwind in coercive binaries: memorandum/anti-memorandum, drachma/euro, fascism/anti-fascism. [...] Yet we don’t for a moment forget the only real binary: Revolution or consistency with the existent. [The 1,000ml of petrol that we placed in the ballot box] are our 1,000 votes, they are our 1,000 challenges in an unapacifiable war.”

30.05.12, Bristol, U.K.: *Broken windows, paint-bombs and tags for the Bristol Conservative Association.* “Brand A, or Brand B, Pepsi or Cola, Labour or Conservative, we are allowed to chose anything we want as long as it’s within the pre-written guidelines of capitalism, the state, and the myth of democracy.”

21.05.12, Genoa, Italy: *A device blows up in a skip next to the polling station in Rapallo, two cop cars are torched in the same area outside the police HQ, and more skips were burned outside another polling station.*

24.10.11, Montevideo, Uruguay: *Arson on the seat of the Communist Party;* “we decided to hit the democracy/dictatorship of the progressive government. [...] Against the milicos of dictatorship and the squaddies of democracy!^[*]” * transl. – The democratic regime had granted the former dictatorship amnesty.

09.01.10, Athens, Greece: *Bombing outside the Greek parliament.* “Democracy’s new social contract is ratified across western capitals: in-between confiscated cars, endless queues forming outside social security services, the torturing take place inside police stations, new cell phone special offers, flat-screen TVs, unemployment benefits, psychological problems and loneliness, upsurges of nationalist pride and unpaid loan installments. And most importantly, non of this was forced upon anyone, nor was it carried by the order of some junta generals. [...] This is why we claim that democracy is the technique and the ability of power not to be understood as oppression.”



Proponents of an ideology typically fail to distinguish between those who have not yet encountered the new ideas they offer, and those who have absorbed these ideas and moved on. The very point of an ideology is that you’re not meant to move on from it; however every ideology, at the very best, has only been a resting point in an onward theoretical journey.

Anarchism, I would argue (perhaps simply because I don’t wish to move on from it), is more a body of thought, a legacy and tradition of revolt aiming towards total freedom from all coercive authority. Its various ideologies – syndicalism, primitivism – have constituted resting points, while a few guiding principles have remained permanent, but by no means ahistorical.

It would be a mistake to critique veganism as an ideology, or as a body of thought and tradition of practice, because there do not even exist any vague guiding principles that all or nearly all vegans share. A great many vegans do not believe it is absolutely wrong to kill other animals for food, and an increasing number do not believe in animal liberation in any radical sense of the term.

Veganism can only be fairly critiqued as an intersectionality, a minimal practice of abstinence that for a variety of reasons very different people choose to identify as an important common ground. For many, the motive is social, to signal belonging to a group or completion of a trend, justified on the grounds of health or ethics. For others, the motive is revolutionary, to develop that minimal practice of abstinence into a maximal practice that might seek, among other things, animal rights, animal liberation, or the abolition of all domination and exploitation.

As such, **this critique of veganism is not at all directed against particular diets or**

lifestyles that could be described as vegan. It is rather directed at the very intersectionality that people choose to identify as an important common ground – based on the argument that there actually is no common ground there – and at the motives and beliefs behind that identification.

The New Thing

The rate at which veganism is being promoted by hipsters,

NGOs, and – increasingly – businesses, leaves no room for doubt that capitalism, the perennial opponent of animal liberation, to say the least, has become the new best friend of veganism. Of course, capitalism also buddied up with the feminist movement, and only the stupidest anarchists took that as a reason not to fight patriarchy. However, the fight against patriarchy and the feminist movement are not necessarily the same thing; there have also been intelligent critiques of particular feminist movements as the best form of struggle against patriarchy, which, regardless of their validity, have made for healthy debate. Likewise, fighting the exploitation of animals and veganism are not the same thing, and the question of whether the latter is useful for the former is also necessary to debate.

It is vital to note that green capitalism is becoming the predominant strategy to allow Capital to survive what may be the biggest crisis it has ever created [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*]. Veganism plays a demonstrable role in greening capitalism. Every vegan who has ever spouted a statistic about the amount of water used to produce a pound of beef or the amount of methane emitted by the world’s sheep is actively supporting capitalism by participating in a great smoke screen which hides the true nature of how the present economic system actually functions. **All talk of efficiency is coming out of the mouth of Capital itself.** Historically, capitalism has needed an ever growing population, although in the future it may find a way out of this obligation. But for the meantime, capitalists must find a way to feed a larger population on less, and in the wealthy metropolis, veganism provides the perfect solution^[1].

As stated in the introduction, veganism in its totality is not an ideology or a tradition of struggle; it only exists as these things for a minority of those who identify as vegans. In its totality, veganism is only the identity

of those who choose it. **Because veganism exists as a chosen common ground between those who struggle for animal liberation and those who are actively working to save capitalism, not to mention to vacate any struggle they come in contact with of its radical content, it could only be justified if it inarguably were the only way to coherently live and fight for anarchist ideals. This, I will argue presently, is not the case.** (One could also counterargue that veganism is potentially useful as a common ground if it serves subversively as a sort of gateway drug into more radical politics. Given the self-evident facts that more people are turned away by veganism than attracted to it, and that those who are attracted to it tend to be wealthier and hipper, veganism makes for a simultaneously uninviting and anemic gatekeeper.)

Animal Rights

Animal rights is a common objective for those vegans whose motivations are ethical, and not only based in health or fashion. I don't know why these people hate other animals so much that they would wish rights on them, but I imagine their malice stems from an ignorance of the meaning of rights, of the policing of living relations in a legal framework, of the democratic project [*ed. – see 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*]. Because a propensity towards democracy is one of the most common strategic and theoretical faults among anarchists at this time, one must again skeptically question the selection of this common ground that breeds so many vices. Because the animal rights agenda is so naïve and reformist, I will subsequently focus on the framework of animal liberation, in an attempt to avoid creating an easy-to-demolish strawman.

Thou Shalt Not Kill

One of multiple ethical justifications for veganism argues that a vegan lifestyle is the only coherent realization of the moral truth that it is wrong to kill other animals. If the moral prohibition against killing is not coming directly from pacifism or Christianity, it can only base itself on an analogy with the fundamental anarchist prohibition against domination: killing is a form of domination, and thus it is contrary to anarchism, except possibly in cases of self-defense. **The analogy is a flagrantly false one.** Though Authority has long flaunted its legitimate ability to kill, annihilation of its subjects has always been a last resort, and this last resort is always taken in order to educate the living. Domination is only successful when the subject is kept alive so its activity can be disciplined and exploited: there's got to be something to dominate.

There's nothing un-anarchist about killing a king, because kings are not a type of

“In some manner or another all forms of life eat some other living thing and then, in turn, are eaten by someone else. Our deaths are usually sad for ourselves but, as Juan Matus [*ed. – of the Yaqui; see Return Fire vol.3 pg59*] points out so well, our deaths are also gifts for someone else, if only for micro-organisms. Human beings, for example, stalk and eat all manner of plants, animals and birds, but we in turn are hunted and eaten by other living animals as well as by bacteria and other tiny living things. Ultimately, of course, worms, bugs and plants will feed upon our bodies and help [the earth] to digest us. [Earth's surface] is largely comprised of the transformed bodies of our relatives who have been dying for millions of years. “Soil fertility” is, in large part, nothing but a measure of the extent to which a particular bit of ground is saturated with our dead ancestors and relatives. Death, then, is a necessary part of life. [...] Killing is a serious business and it requires spiritual preparation. Moreover, one should feel the pain and sorrow of killing a brother or sister, whether it is a weed, a tree or a deer. If one does not feel that pain, one has become brutalized and “sick.”” – Jack D. Forbes

people whom anarchists wish to dominate at the end of the day. Rather, kings and other authorities constitute a political project of domination, and killing them is a rejection of their project, a demonstration that their control is imperfect, and an invitation to more acts of rebellion and disorder that will end, if successful, not with more subjects, but with no subjects, and therefore no domination.

Killing need not be an act of negation, either. It can also be the foundation of a relationship. The lion is not the king of the jungle (nor is it even a typical member of a jungle ecosystem, to get pedantic). The predator does not dominate the prey, nor does it negate them. It enters into a relationship with them, and this relationship is mutual – or in other words, of a sort that anarchists should find interesting and potentially inspiring. Many animal liberationists have human exceptionalism so ingrained, they actually reproduce the -ism they are combating (this at least they would have in common with other identity politicians). If human morality must stand above natural relations such as the one between predator and prey, then it is hypocrisy to talk of speciesism; we could only talk of salvation. And if we then shift the terrain of the argument to point out that the natural relation of predator and prey is absent in industrial food production, we would be dishonest to not also admit that we have no coherent moral qualm against killing for food, merely a contextual rejection of killing as an industry. But this would make us luddites at heart, not vegans.

Speaking from the gut for a moment, I find the moral against killing to be utterly repulsive. I think it's a disgusting disconnection from the natural world and our animal selves. Killing can be a beautiful thing. It can also be a tool in the service of domination. It is not simply and inherently one or the other.

A prohibition against killing seems to be just the idea of rights in disguise. The right to life is meaningless without a political authority to enforce it and to engage in the

project of engineering the very meaning of life. A right to life could also be safeguarded by a shared community ethos, but such a community determination would be powerless against the realities of nature (unlike the State, which has the capacity to reengineer nature). And nature knows no rights; once it gives us life, it only guarantees us the certainty of death. The Western tragic ideal, which is inextricable from the capitalist war against nature, presents death as a bad thing, and apparently so do some vegans, but to the rest of us, this only appears as philosophical immaturity.

One could, in counterargument, make a distinction between death by natural causes and death by killing, but this only increases a separation between humans and other animal species. **If human ethics and the behavior of other animals exist in completely separate spheres, then it becomes impossible to talk about animal liberation without “liberation” taking on an entirely Christian or colonial meaning (such as the “liberation of Iraq”).** If a human killing for food is not natural, then we have nothing in common with other animals, in which case the only honest vegan discourse would be one of “charity towards defenseless animals.” Of course, “natural” is a sophistic and often manipulated category anyways [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg92*], but let's remember that this line of argument begins with a vegan attempt to separate “natural” and “cultural” forms of eating.

Having thus alienated us from nature, a vegan could make the irrefutable argument that we have the choice whether or not to kill other animals for food, but this reasoning is circular, resting again on the assumption that killing other animals is wrong and should be avoided if possible. (They may tack on a multicultural [*ed. – see Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe/Q*], demeaning, and victimistic exception for hunter-gatherers, poor people with limited food access, and others who “don't have a choice”). It would be more logically coherent to argue, also irrefutably,

that eating anything is a choice, and given human involvement in so many world problems, we should stop eating altogether.

Which brings up the question of eating plants. It's unfortunate that so many facetious jackasses, when they first hear about this weird thing called vegetarianism, think they're being so clever when they ask why it's okay to eat plants if it's not okay to eat animals, because there is actually an important point to be made here.

The consensus view on why it's okay to eat plants and not animals is because plants do not have central nervous systems (although neither do several members of the animal kingdom) and therefore can feel no pain. There are a number of things wrong with this argument. First of all, it is not falsifiable and not empirical (in the best possible sense of this term) to assert that plants do not feel. A great many cultures that have an infinitely better track record – than the consumer culture that birthed veganism – in living as a respectful part of their ecosystem and not exploiting animals insist that all living things have personhood [ed. – including much beyond Western concepts of living/dead; see **Return Fire vol.4 pg39**]. And within the skeptical and mechanistic confines of Western science, there are also a number of indications, on the level of organic electrical activity for example, that plants interact with their environment in a way that could encompass feeling. They inarguably display rejection or attraction to different stimuli, depending on the consequence of those stimuli for their wellbeing.

On the other hand, if a complex central nervous system is the sole basis, in human beings, for the capacity to feel pain, there are a great many animals with such simple nervous systems that it would be hard to believe they could feel anything more than attraction or repulsion to different stimuli. Exactly why a living being should be valued based on what comes down to its supposed similarity to human beings is something that vegans should have to explain.

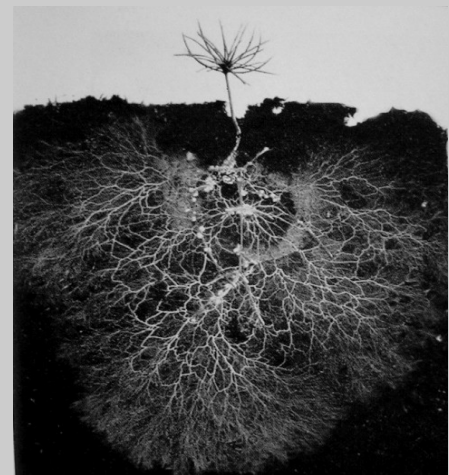
If it is domination to kill, why do we respect animals and not plants? If it is wrong to cause pain, why do we give animals the benefit of the doubt, and give other living things the short shrift when in neither case is it certain if or what they feel? **Is our only criterion their similarity to us?** Could the advanced ethical arguments of veganism be little more complex than those PETA posters that always champion cute puppies, and never crabs or cockroaches?

In any case, the downward extension of the right not to feel pain to those creatures most similar to ourselves (but only similar to us in a mechanical understanding of ourselves) closely mirrors the extension of

democratic rights from an elite to the majority of humankind. This extension was not a gradual sequence of delayed charity but a violent process that incorporated the new citizens into the rationalistic Cartesian^[2] conception of man [ed. – see **'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'**]; rights were a trojan horse for a more detailed domination. Vegan morality, in other words, constitutes another alienation from nature; to prevent killing or the infliction of pain, human society would have to remove all remnants of ecosystem relations from our food production, producing human and natural spheres that ideally do not touch at all.

This alienation is most obvious in the bizarre aversion to pain expressed by some ethical vegans. Rather than constructing a sensible ethical framework, in which it is simply wrong to lock up another living thing or to enforce coercive non-reciprocal relationships with other living things, the veganism which is based on a prohibition of killing permits the contradiction of killing plants by elaborating an immorality of the causing of pain. (As a side note regarding non-reciprocal relationships, it is important to recognize the centrality of coercion in order to distinguish between non-reciprocal Authority and non-reciprocal parasites, the latter inhabiting an important ecosystemic niche).

I find it hard to understand someone who does not comprehend that pain is natural, necessary, and good. **When we inflict pain on others, our faculties of sympathy provoke a conflict within us, and such conflict is also good, because it makes us think and question what we're doing, whether it's necessary, and whether there's also an element of the beautiful in it. Evolving to eat animals and also to feel sympathy, our biology saddles us with a choice. Either we form an intimate relationship with that which we eat, understand it as a privilege to accompany the other creature in its last moments, and look forward to the day when we will also be killed and eaten; or we avoid this difficult process by forming an ideology so we know that what we are doing, a priori, is right, and therefore not a**



“There is no difference [between plants and animals in terms of their aliveness]. That we think there is is a direct result of our schooling, which has taught us inaccurate maps of the reality around us. Plants have as sophisticated a neural network as most animals, in some instances their neural networks dwarf our own. We are the only culture in the history of the world that has forgotten this. To think that plants are sentient, as we are sentient, is a huge step. For many people taking the next step and understanding that places also contain livingness, that they extend meanings outward to us is even harder. Still, all of us have walked into a restaurant with a friend and suddenly stopped and said, “*This place feels funny, let's leave.*” If we extend that feeling capacity outwardly into the wild of the world we immediately feel the livingness and intelligence of place. All cultures prior to the emergence of Christianity and Islam understood this. Once we reclaim that understanding it is much harder to treat the outside world carelessly, for we know, deep within ourselves, that it is as alive as we are alive and that caring that we feel interferes with careless attitudes and behaviors. [M]ost of us have been trained to see the plant world as a simple, and unintelligent background to the human world. It takes many years to escape that training, still it proceeds in slow increments. The first step is to allow the sense of wonder we had as children to return, to let ourselves feel the touch of the world upon us and to follow its lead. It begins with simple things such as coming upon a magnificent old growth tree in a forest and being overcome with the feeling that it engenders in us.” – Stephen Harrod Buhner

cause for conflict, sympathy, or doubt. The depersonalization and degradation of animals that accompanies ideas of human supremacy is one such ideology that accomplishes an end run around emotional conflict. Veganism, which extends human supremacy downwards to include the whole of the animal kingdom and depersonalizes the rest of the natural world, is another. With both the loud, proud meat-eaters and the vegans, the effect is the same: *to not have to feel sympathy or respect for the living beings which you must kill in order to survive.*

From Boycott to Insurrection

A great many vegans do not believe that it is fundamentally wrong to kill for food, but they understand the shamefulness of locking living beings up in cages, and therefore of the meat industry. As long as the meat industry exists, they want no part of it. Maybe they see their veganism as a boycott of the industry, which, along with other tactics, will bring it down, or maybe it is simply a coherent emotional response. More likely to approve of freeganism^[3], this type of vegan will say that they might eat meat if they lived in a healthy, ecologically sustainable society, but within industrial society they consider it impermissible. It is important to distinguish between these two types of radical vegans – those who think it is absolutely wrong to eat meat and those who think it is situationally wrong, leaving aside for now non-evangelical vegans who see veganism as a choice befitting their particular struggle – because the moral vegans will often respond to criticisms of vegan ethics with arguments based on the tenets of situational vegans, confusing the distinction between the specific context they use rhetorically, and the absolute ethics they use it to defend. For example, a typical response to the first version of this article deliberately conflated the two arguments, dodging the ethical criticism of veganism by falsely painting it as an ethical apology for the factory system of food production. As can clearly be seen in the preceding section, the ethical criticism is based in the possibility of a healthy, ecological, non-industrial relationship with our food. In this section, the struggle against industrial food production is taken as a given, and the only criticism made against veganism in this respect regards its efficacy in challenging and undermining this industry.

While they can be counted on to be less manipulative than moral vegans, practical vegans generally obscure the true functioning of capitalism and thus hinder the struggle against animal exploitation and ecocide, two phenomena which cannot be viewed entirely separately, even though animal rights, and certain versions of animal liberation, highlight the former at the expense of the latter.

Although it seeks to be strategic in nature, practical veganism creates a false understanding of capitalism and a false sense of moral purity or superiority, both of which are fatal to the struggle against domination.

In the first place, true veganism is impossible for anyone who lives within capitalist society. Most fruits and vegetables are pollinated with bees or wasps, many of which are commercially farmed. A substantial proportion of fields

are fertilized with manure or slurry from industrial meat farms. The commercial alternative to this, generally, is chemical fertilizer, which constitutes mining and the destruction of the oceans: is veganism in this case any kind of step forward? (Or, to use another example, when a friend asked me to hand her her jacket, which, she self-righteously pointed out, was not made from animal skin, her sense of superiority was quickly deflated when I said, “Here’s your jacket made from petroleum products.”)

It goes further than this. Imagine a vegan vertical monopoly that produces food, from start to finish, without bees, without manure, and hell, let’s pretend they even use organic fertilizers and pesticides, and don’t use giant tractors that crush moles, insects, and other animal life. Only rich people would be able to afford this food, but regardless of the final price, all profit made from the buying and selling of this food represents a return on investment, a cash flow that a diverse web of banks, insurance companies, and investors turn right around and put into other industries – **the weapons industry, clothing manufacture, vivisection, adventure tourism, prosthetic devices, turkey factories, cobalt mining, student loans, it doesn’t matter.**

Let’s put this more concretely. Every single vegan restaurant in the world, as long as they meet the minimum definition of a restaurant (selling food) supports the meat industry, because in industrial civilization, there is no meat industry and vegetable industry, there is only Capital, expanding at the expense of everything else.

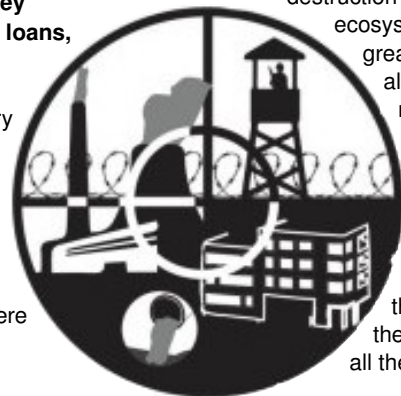
The vegan argument against stealing meat is indicative: if you steal meat, the supermarket may lose money, but they will order more meat product to replace their stock, so more meat will be consumed. However, it is the profit made by the supermarket that is reinvested primarily in food distribution of all kinds, and secondarily in all other industries imaginable. What’s good for veganism, in this case – buying vegetables and not stealing meat – is good for capitalism, bad for the planet, bad for animals. Ethical consumption of any kind is a mirage. All consumption fuels Capital and hurts the planet. Stealing meat is better for animals than buying vegetables from a supermarket, but both stealing and buying are a dead end as long as we don’t dismantle the industrial civilization that is destroying the Earth and exploiting or liquidating all its inhabitants.

Not only is there no modern example of an effective boycott against an entire product category as opposed to a single brand, the very idea of better consumer choices

represents how environmental movements of various stripes have aided capitalism.

When the reformist environmentalists of the ’80s promoted responsible consumerism (e.g. *101 Things You Can Do to Save the Planet*), they played their part in increasing domestic electricity efficiency in the US. This increase in efficiency enabled a decrease in prices, which allowed an increase in total electricity consumption, and all the accompanying consequences for the environment. Within a market economy, a decrease in meat consumption could lead to a decrease in meat prices, which would lead to a net increase in meat consumption as those segments of the population not yet won over by veganism take advantage of the drop in prices.

Some mythical vegan movement that became large enough to cause a collapse in the meat industry through boycotts and accompanying sabotage would find itself in a dead end, having promoted a change in capitalism that would allow greater efficiency in world food production, a higher world population, and the destruction of



ecosystems on a greater scale. The alienation from nature would reach its logical conclusion: most animals would be freed from their cages, but they’d be fucked all the same.

Not only does veganism encourage an ignorance of market mechanisms, it also conflates consumption with agency and thus promotes a fundamental democratic myth. People are held responsible for what they buy and consume, and therefore the consumer arena is portrayed as one of free choice, rather than a violently imposed role [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*]. All the violence and domination of the capitalist system is ingrained in the role of the consumer, in every corner of a society based on the production, buying and selling of commodities. Except for the most skilled of evaders, and the inhabitants of a few remote jungle and mountain regions (all of whom base their antiauthoritarian subsistence strategies in part on hunting^[4]), it is impossible to opt out of capitalism. A vegan lifestyle in no way damages capitalism, ends ecocide or animal exploitation, or severs one’s material connections to even just the animal industry, given the interlaced nature of industrial society. Assuming that veganism has anything to do with animal liberation

would be like calling an anarchist a hypocrite for having a job, driving on state highways, going to a hospital, or occasionally opting to follow the law. The exploitation of animals and the destruction of the environment are hardwired into the present system. What matters is that we fight this system. What we eat and what we buy or don't buy in the meantime are choices whose only ramifications are personal.

The nature of industrial society is completely missed when we see agency in consumer choices. As long as we take care of ourselves and our comrades, how we survive the blackmails of capitalism is unimportant. The only thing that matters are our attacks against the existing system. Political veganism is an exercise in irrelevance.

It is no coincidence that many of those anarchists who reconquered the ability to feed themselves – rewilding, scavenging, or setting up farms – were among the first to abandon veganism. They had left consumerism behind, inasmuch as they could, and were coming in contact again with natural realities, and reciprocal relationships that don't fit into easy ethical frameworks [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg95*].

The Healthiest Diet

Before I point out some common vegan health misinformation, it's only fair to point out the lies on the other side. The most common scientific argument I've ever heard against the universal applicability of a vegan diet states that people of certain blood types need to eat meat in order to survive. I looked it up, and the study is thoroughly discredited, and it was flimsy to begin with. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, the dairy industry propaganda that milk is good for your bones is also false; broccoli, in fact, is much better. But a lot of research and a determination not to be suckered by fables from either side has led me to the conclusion that not everyone can be healthy on a vegan diet. Most of all, personal experience and the experiences of friends has corroborated that conclusion.

To the best of my knowledge, the following facts are solid, and rarely mentioned by those vegans who ply the supposed health advantages of their diet:

- humans evolved on an omnivorous diet;
- different people need different amounts of various nutrients, such as iron and B12;
- some people have lower or higher absorption rates of these nutrients;
- dietary pills are often an unreliable source of nutrients, not only because they are generally produced by profit-interested companies, but also because humans

evolved to absorb their nutrients from food and not from pills (in the case of iron, dietary pills and "iron-fortified" foods contain the inferior non-heme iron from plant sources);

- heme iron, which is only found in animal sources, has an absorption rate of between 20% and 35% whereas the non-heme iron found in plant sources has an absorption rate of between 2% and 20%;

- absorption rates of heme iron is always high, whereas absorption rates of non-heme iron are affected by other dietary elements (animal protein and Vitamin C raise non-heme absorption rates, soy proteins and the phytic acid found in leafy greens lowers the non-heme absorption rates);

- unabsorbed iron, whether from pills or non-heme iron, damages cell tissue and causes health problems;

- lack of iron or especially B12 can build up over time and take years to manifest in health problems, but when such problems arise they can be gravely serious;

- there are no vegan foods that are naturally high in iron;

- zinc, another important mineral, is lacking in many vegetarian diets, and is also blocked by the phytic acid in leafy greens;

- B12 is not found in plant sources, a B12 deficiency is extremely dangerous but it can take 5–20 years to manifest, and its symptoms are masked by the folic acid which abounds in vegan diets;

- vegan B12 can only be reliably gotten in certain brands of nutritional yeast, although some people's bodies reject the yeast, or in pills or artificially fortified foods, which often have low absorption rates. (For myth-busting regarding vegan foods that are supposedly high in iron, or the argument that humans are naturally vegetarian, see the appendix [ed. – omitted for lack of space, but available with the original text at theanarchistlibrary.org].)

It follows from the above facts that some people, provided they are extremely conscientious about their diet, can live healthily and happily on a vegan diet. A few will feel bad on such a diet from the get go. And a larger group, after a matter of years, will become increasingly unhealthy and even develop anemia or other conditions.

A friend of mine who had never accepted my arguments against veganism only after her body demanded it of her. She had developed anemia, a severe shortage of B12, and depression, and was feeling so bad that she was becoming suicidal. The arrogant, cultish commentary of, "if you're not a vegan now

you never were," simply doesn't apply to her. She's someone who is extremely dedicated to animal liberation, who has put her freedom and her body on the line, who has always been conscientious about her diet. In the first few years, she did great with a vegan diet, but after long enough she caused herself health problems that she could no longer ignore. Her case is more dramatic than most, but it's probable that a lot of the time, what appears to be the loss of motivation to maintain a diet is related to the general loss of motivation that accompanies anemia or a B12 shortage. Other times it's just the case that people are listening to their bodies without realizing that's what they're doing.

Regardless, when we hear someone tell us that a vegan diet can work for anyone, and if we gave up on it it's because of a personal failing, we know in our bones and in our guts that this is just ideological authoritarianism. When we weren't eating meat, we experienced it the same way when some jerk told us we had to eat animals. Eating, ultimately, constitutes a very personal relationship. A sure way to make an enemy is to devalue their diet. Which again raises the question of the strategic common ground constituted by veganism. Looking at vegans as a whole, and at anarchists as a whole, with whom do we feel more affinity?

The supposed health benefits of veganism are not as simple as they are often presented. Many of the studies cited by vegans to their favour do not actually measure a strictly vegan diet, but mix vegans in with those who eat very little in the way of animal products (i.e. the studies will ask respondents if they eat meat "less than once a week, two or three times a week, once a day" and so on). Once there are more vegan capitalists, such studies will surely find their funding^[5] (it won't be long now), but until recently, the scientific establishment hasn't been so interested in reifying veganism as a category so much as comparing relative amounts of different food groups in a diet. These studies are also affected by the fact that vegans and vegetarians tend to be more health conscious and wealthier, meaning that regardless of the meat question, they're putting higher quality food in their bodies.

The arguments about meat consumption being bad for the heart are complicated, but vegan interventions in these arguments have tended towards simplification. High cholesterol in the blood can be bad for the heart, and meat is astronomically higher in cholesterol. **However, the body is not a machine you pour ingredients into.** There is no strong connection between cholesterol in the diet and cholesterol in the blood stream. Furthermore, cholesterol is an important nutrient. Some studies have suggested that animal fats trigger

cholesterol build-up in the bloodstream, but other studies point out that the former conflate saturated fats from animal sources with trans fats, which come from processed vegetable oils and abound in many vegan diets. There is a general consensus on the harmfulness of trans fats, and a multiplicity of studies that allege some health risks and some health benefits from animal fats. What seems to be undisputable is that there are many benefits from animal fats, and all of the health risks are neutralized by sufficient physical exercise and enough fiber in the diet. On the other hand, someone who does not lead an active life and has little access to fresh food should not eat red meat, although baked, boiled, or raw fish will generally improve their health.

An undisputed fact is that in the countries with the longest life expectancy, and generally also those with high rates of heart health, people tend to eat moderate to high amounts of animal fats, but very low amounts of processed foods.

As far as the heart goes, what is most certain is that fiber is good for it. There's no point beating around the bush: meat has no fiber. But if meat is not crowding plants out of one's diet, it probably isn't bad for your heart, and no study I'm aware of has demonstrated that meat in moderate quantities is bad if it is accompanied by lots of fiber and exercise. In other words, by most accounts, a diet based on fruits, vegetables, and meat is healthier for most people than a diet based on fruits, vegetables, and grains. **But the heart is not the only organ in the body.** What I've never heard a vegan mention are the studies documenting the negative health consequences of a diet lacking animal fats, such as higher rates of depression, fatigue, and violent death. Nor do many vegan websites mention that soy is toxic when unfermented (nearly all commercial tofu, and all TVP, is unfermented). Only tempeh and authentic bean curd pass this hurdle. As for seitan, though it is not a soy product, the gluten it is made from is bad for a comparable percentage of the population as the cow milk which vegans often demonize. Soy dust is also an allergen that increases asthma rates, particularly in port cities where rainforest soy is unloaded and sent to market.

Given the moralistic weight of the concept of the "natural" [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg24*], it is no surprise that some vegans have alleged meat consumption to be unnatural for humans. The fossil record, the diets of the most closely related primates, the length of our intestines, and our ability to digest raw meat all point to an omnivorous diet going back to the beginning of the species. The specific allegations regarding evolution are debunked in detail in the appendix.

Religious Tendencies

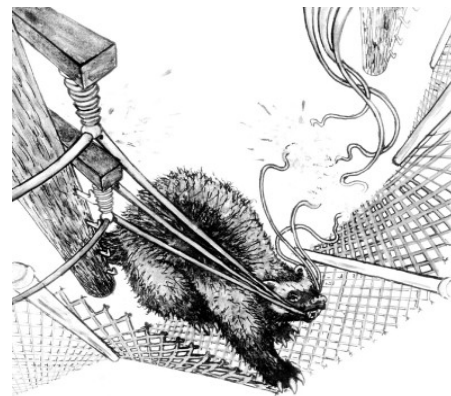
The almost systematic presence of misinformation in specifically vegan circles indicates a religious quality to veganism. Many vegans consistently formulate their lifestyle as part of a dedicated struggle for liberation, but those who are exempt from the critique of dogmatism should still be asked why they choose to create common ground with those vegans who are moralistic and manipulative.

Dogmatism is in many ways reinforced by the very construction of veganism.

Veganism creates a righteous in-group on the basis of an illusion of purity. Many of us have had the frustrating experience of arguing with vegans who go in circles, claiming that they do not support the meat industry even after they are forced to acknowledge that all industries are interconnected; we are reminded of arguing with Christians whose every proof comes back to the bible, or more precisely, their desire to believe in it. The fact that the idea of purity or non-responsibility does not square with how capitalism actually functions, and thus a vegan diet which does nothing to materially attack the structural causes of animal exploitation cannot be accepted, because the actual meaning of veganism, as such, is the embrace of the illusion of purity, the entering of the in-group.

The existence of this in-group can also be seen in the place of vegetarians on the moral hierarchy. Any well read vegan knows that, within their own logic of responsibility, a vegetarian is just as responsible as a meat eater for animal exploitation, because the production of eggs or dairy is integrated with meat production, in that morally direct way they find somehow more visible than, say, the integration of the transport industry with meat production^[6]. However, the vegan who is prone to judge or proselytize (who is not every vegan, and perhaps not even the majority, but a common enough figure) will place the vegetarian who consumes milk daily higher up on the moral scale than the omnivore who eats homegrown fruits and vegetables and eats meat once a week.

Another religious feature of veganism can be found in its concept of liberation or solidarity. The vegan model is remarkably similar to the militant Christian charity of the abolitionists, given the fact that they are **speaking in the name of beings who do not speak for themselves, and building solidarity with allies who will never criticize or demand anything of them** (in the case of the abolitionists, the ideal of the mute slave was not a reality but a desired condition reinforced by the general lack of direct communication between the abolitionists in the North and the slaves in the South). Clearly, many



animals struggle against being locked up, and nature in general throws down walls and erodes boundaries. But veganism, in the minority occasions when it is accompanied by actions for animal liberation, imposes an ethical space on the animal kingdom that other animals had no hand (paw?) in creating. **Veganism refuses the possibility of learning from other animals – for me a precondition for real solidarity, but evidently not for them – by rejecting the development of an ethical framework in which we all depend on each other and sometimes eat each other, as in the animal world.**

On the vegan sanctuary farms, do they put the rescued foxes in with the rescued chickens? And if they feed the rescued dogs and cats meat instead of tofu, is it okay because they're just animals, but we've risen above that kind of behavior? Such an attitude crosses the line between ally and savior.

Go Omnivore

There are innumerable ways for omnivorous anarchists to live coherently and formulate a diet that realizes their struggle for total liberation in their daily life. Necessarily, this great diversity of diets would have one point in common: the recognition that, because capitalism is a coercive and totalizing imposition, purity is neither desirable nor possible, thus what a person eats should not *model an ideal* but *highlight a conflict*.

This could take the form of scavenging or stealing to feed oneself. Both of these activities cultivate low intensity illegality and thus antagonism with the dominant system. And both, if they are realized within an expansive anarchist practice, suggest possibilities for elevating tactics and moving towards collective action. In the former case, one can sabotage trash compactors and other capitalist techniques of enclosing an inadvertently created commons [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg55*] (the trash). In the latter case, one can organize proletarian shopping or supermarket raids [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg25*].

In places with easier access to physical space, such as rural areas or decaying

urban areas, one can seize land to create gardens and farms and promote the self-organization of our own food supply. This tends to work better, and enable a fuller realization of anarchist ideals, if it is modeled on an ecosystem rather than a factory, which means gardens and farms with animals. Depending on the scale this could include bees, fish, chickens, goats, and more. **Such projects will pose the difficult but necessary challenge of figuring out a mutual and respectful relationship among all the species that live off the farm; planning from within rather than from above, learning how to listen to the other beings that use the farm and allow them to impact the plans; and adapting new norms for dealing with the emotional conflict we should feel when we kill other living beings.**

In places where we have contact with wilderness, we can – as many people are doing now – relearn many important skills related to feeding ourselves. If this is truly done not as a hobby but as the realization of a desire for liberation, it will necessarily entail conflict with the State and interrupt state narratives of progress [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg11*] and citizenship [ed. – see *'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*]. Where indigenous peoples continue to practice their traditional forms of food production, they almost always find themselves in conflict with the State.

And then there's another take entirely, in which neither our diet nor anything else about our lives is purported to be consistent with our ideals. It's a possibility that veganism seems to miss entirely, and it goes like this: *many of us are poor. We eat whatever we can get from the dumpster, steal when the security guard isn't looking, or buy what we can on a shitty wage. There is no dietary option in this world that satisfies us, not in the expensive eco-friendly supermarket, not in the cheap bulk section of a discount store that may or may not exist in our neighborhood, and certainly not in the permaculture farm outside of our city where the escapist hippies spend all their time feeding themselves while the world goes to shit.*

We eat whatever food we can, sucking down the poisons of this shitty world, just to live another day and gain another opportunity to wreak destruction, to attack, to destroy a small piece of what degrades us. Cannibalism is the norm in our world. We eat our fellow animals, raised in extermination camp conditions, we wear clothes made by fellow workers in sweatshops, we breathe air so polluted it gives us cancer, we walk down streets paved with petroleum byproduct, and we're forced to spend a large part of our time

exploiting and betraying ourselves. None of this is a choice, just a reflection of the fact that we live in hell. Until the present social order is destroyed and all of the cages and prisons opened and razed, the only choice we acknowledge is negation. Unlike the naïve vegan novice out to change the world, we don't kid ourselves into thinking we can live our ideals. That's exactly why we're at war.

If we seek to realize our struggle in our diet, abandoning veganism creates more possibilities for self-organization of food, a mutual relationship with our environment, bioregional flexibility and sensitivity, and anticivilizational ethics. If we reject the totality of this society or lack access to an autonomous space for maneuver, the only thing that matters is attacking the existent and sustaining ourselves in the meantime. In either case, an omnivorous diet makes sense.

Stay Vegan

There is a major operative difference between the statements “I don't eat any animal products” and “I am vegan.” All identity, on some level, is a political choice. The strategy behind the identity of veganism is poorly thought out. The practice of not eating animal products, on the other hand, may have a number of justifications.

I don't care to convince anyone to abandon a vegan lifestyle. There are plenty of good reasons to live that way, though the only ones I can think of are strictly subjective: some people feel healthier on a vegan diet; some people find it emotionally easier or more sensible to struggle for animal liberation if nothing they eat once had a face; some people do not want to put anything in their bodies that lived a tortured life, and veganism serves as an effective psychological barrier against some of the worst atrocities of capitalism, even if practically speaking it makes no difference in ending those atrocities or one's material connection to them.

What I intend with this article is to indignantly reject the much-tossed-around argument that it is incoherent for anarchists to eat meat, and morally superior for them to be vegans. I want to reach people who are dedicated to the principles behind veganism but whose bodies are suffering from the diet, to emphasize that it doesn't work for everybody. I want to attack an ethical framework I find immature and overly civilized. And most of all I want to contribute to an end to the days when veganism is the norm in collective anarchist spaces, and anyone who does not follow this lifestyle is marginalized in every social center, at every conference. There are a great many reasons against generalized veganism. There is no reason

why those of us who have already passed through veganism and out the other side should be closeted in common anarchist spaces, or treated as less dedicated in the struggle for the end of all forms of domination.

**Against consumer society,
against civilization,
until no one has to live in a cage!**



1. ed. – “The Animal Aid Society's “Campaign to Promote the Vegetarian Diet” calculates that ten acres will feed two people keeping cattle, ten eating maize, twenty-four munching wheat, and sixty-one gulping soya. The same space would probably support one or fewer hunter-gatherers. There is nothing wrong with their humane effort “toward fighting hunger in the Third World” of course, but what is life to be like for the sixty-one people and what do we do when there are 122 or 488? And what becomes of the Fourth World of tribal peoples or the Fifth World of nonhuman life? The quantitative-mindedness links them philosophically with the nationalistic maximizers who assume that military advantage belongs to the most populous countries, with the politics of growth-economists and with the local greed for sales” (Paul Shepard).

2. ed. – “[René] Descartes was the man who famously said “I think therefore I am” for those who haven't studied classical philosophy (which is generally, in my opinion, a bunch of white men trying to place humans above the rest of the world, but that is a whole other can of worms). He is also the philosopher responsible for the popularization of the contemporary concept of the mechanization of the body and the body as an individual thing, separate from the context of its existence. Prior to Descartes, people thought that their bodies were part of a greater whole: their community and the larger community of the land they lived on. Descartes' ideas were very appealing to the ruling class, who were trying to establish a new order: capitalism. In the infancy of capitalism, ideas about the body needed to change. Waged labour turned the body into capital, something that exists beyond the natural cycles of a wild human body. Capitalism required that the ruling class have more control over bodies in order to extract higher profits. Reconceptualizing the body as machine, as something that existed to be controlled and put to work, served the ruling elite in their enforcement of budding capitalism. Capitalism also required the newer idea of land privatization. Descartes ideas of the “individual”, something separate from all else, created a philosophy where land exploitation was justifiable. Humans who are not connected to a land base have an easier time exploiting it. There was much rebellion against Descartes ideas and against the beginnings of capitalism.

The peasantry did not easily accept the view of body as separate and rebelled against land privatization and waged labour. So it was in this time that almost 200 different crimes were punishable by death as a means of the ruling class to enforce capitalistic ideas and force bodies to act as controllable machines” (Descartes & the Creation of the Individual).

3. ed. – Freegans refuse non-vegan food/goods if they have had to pay for it, but will use it in some cases if they have stolen, found, or been given it. In this way they claim not to support the industry.

4. ed. – “Hunting is a social relationship between humans and animal persons carried on in terms and acts that signify, among other forms of sociality, respect, reciprocity, propitiation, sympathy, taboo, seduction, sacrifice, coercion, recognition, compassion, domination, temptation, surrender and various combinations thereof. Hunting is a culturally-informed, transpecific sociology. People are thus engaged in transactions with the spirits of animals that correspond to exchanges between human persons and groups. Especially these transactions are likely to resemble exchanges with relatives by marriage, insofar as the latter similarly involve fraught negotiations for the transfer of life-powers from one group to another. [Claude] Levi-Strauss relates a tradition (originally recorded by J.A. Teit) concerning the origin of the wild goat hunt along the Thompson River people of Northwest America, in which the goat principal is not only human but a brother-in-

law of the human hero. The latter is promised he will become a great hunter if he follows certain rules: “When you kill goats, treat their bodies respectfully, for they are people. Do not shoot the female goats for they are your wives and will bear your children. Do not kill kids, for they may be your offspring. Only shoot your brothers-in-law, the male goats. Do not be sorry when you kill them, for they do not die but return home.

The flesh and skin (the goat part) remain in your possession, but their real selves (the human part) lives just as before, when it was covered with goat’s flesh and skin.” In other Amerindian narratives, the hunter becomes a privileged son-in-law of the spirit master of the game species by mating with the master’s daughter. Although the neo-Darwinian sciences of our animality, culminating in the current Evolutionary Psychology, would have it that we still suffer genetically from the ferocity that the human species found adaptive in its long history of surviving by the killing of animals, the ethnographic evidence is that hunting is generally more involved with making love than making war” (The Western Illusion of Human Nature).

5. ed. – One of the reasons we chose not to prioritise space for the appendix here is a skepticism we hold in general towards these kinds of studies (though it’s certainly worth reading for description of vegan ideologues’ manipulations within the scientific realm they appeal to the authority of). Dot Matrix’s words on this resonate: “Science is so widely accepted

that for many people it has in fact become synonymous with problem solving. Even people who are critical of most other aspects of the culture we live in, find themselves reverting to science when pushed to defend their ideas, e.g. anti-civilization anarchists who refer to biology when attempting to convince about an optimal diet, or to anthropology to prove the superiority of their blue print for future societies. [...] On a practical level there is the understanding that scientists are operating within a system that is based as much (if not more) on hierarchy and funding as it is on paying attention to what is actually going on around us. There are multiple accounts (even from conventional sources) showing that who is funding a study has a substantive impact on what the study discovers, from tobacco’s impact on health to the possibility of restricting the spread of genetically modified organisms, but these examples are merely the most obvious. The more subtle ones have to do with how we ask questions (“when did you stop beating your child?”), who we ask questions of (related to the questioner’s access, biases, language, etc.), what questions we think to ask, and how we understand the answers we get, as well as what meta-interests the questions serve (how are the assumptions of this culture fed and/or challenged by who, how, and of whom these questions get asked?). [...] While on one hand science is a response to the superstition and hierarchy associated with religion, it also continues christianity’s theme of a pure abstract and universal truth, separate from the sludge of everyday life, with scientists and doctors in the position of clergy that is, people who know more about us than we do. Some people believe in science (as something they don’t understand that can solve their problems) in ways similar to how others believe in god. Some people cite scientific references the way that other people cite scripture. Traditionally, science posits a neutral objective observer, a fantastical being to compare to any angel or demon: this neutral observer has no interest other than truth, which comes from information, and information is received inside of laboratories, with carefully identified variables and carefully maintained control sets. (The mystification of this awesome observer is only magnified, not ameliorated, by the addition of peer review, in which a body of knowledgeable colleagues examine the experiments and data to verify their validity).”

6. ed. – “Oil spills damage bird-nesting sites, coat beach habitats in sludge, and poison and directly kill fish, birds, and other marine life. Pipeline construction destroys wildlife habitat. Oil refineries spew pollution into waterways, poisoning animals and destroying their breeding sites. This says nothing of the resource wars for oil that have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, and continue to, in Afghanistan, Iraq and Africa, as well as destroyed the ecological integrity of those regions. The fact is, organic soybeans used for tofu, tempeh, and fake meats, just like any other product in the store, use the same industrial distribution system that consumes enormous amounts of oil and other resources to package, store, transport, and distribute food and non-food commodities the world over. This translates into mountainsides and rivers destroyed from mining fossil fuels, forests cleared for packaging materials, chemical pollution from the manufacture of the inks, adhesives and lubricants, and so on and so forth. All these industrial processes poison animals and destroy their habitats” (The Harvest of Dead Elephants).

“My relationship to other animal species is mechanical and disconnected. Aside from pets and pests, I relate indirectly to livestock through mediation of an enormous industry which uses techniques I barely understand and which I am shielded from by my life in a city. Unlike with pets, I can only relate to livestock categorically. I can form no bonds with particular cows, chickens, pigs, and fish. I can only consider them all generally, as the multiplied reiteration of livestock I have met and the treatment I am aware that they receive. What I am actually presented with in my everyday life are various cuts of raw meat, products which may or may not be based on animal substances, menus with pictures of prepared dishes, items that were tested first on other animal species, and propaganda put out by corporations and/or activist groups. Livestock and lab animals are represented to me, but they aren’t actually a part of my experience. This is true for everything I eat, wear, medicinally treat myself with, and use. The world that I live in is a giant, illustrious production that has been designed by human beings, for human beings... to shelter each of the individuals who can afford it, away from the wilderness, from agriculture, from mass-production, from landfills, and from slums. [...] Although there are some cracks through which unwanted elements seep through and into my everyday life: pollution lowers the air quality, global warming fucks with the weather, a disease will gain entry through products, the tap water tastes terrible, animals being transported can sometimes be seen on the roads, a forest fire will make the headlines, etc. Regardless, the way in which consumption takes place – although changing – doesn’t speak to the origins of the materials very loudly. Before the problem of what to consume is the problem of how to go about consuming. Perhaps even the question of how to go about producing! What would most effectively change my relationship to other animal species is those more basic questions which would dramatically alter the way I confront that which I consume. Without those changes, all of my consumption choice is derived from abstract considerations, from the world of representation. [...] There are times when I may feel like I have been tricked and if I had known better, would not consent to the consumption of one product or another. But the fact of the matter is that where consent is concerned, it is my own consent which is to be questioned and not that of the entities which I am making decisions for one way or another... whose life quality and quantity is calibrated by the mechanisms of markets and conditions produced by human civilization.” – *squee*

'CONNECTIONS & TRANSFORMATIONS'

[ed. – Drawn from two Paul Shepard essays, 'Animal Rights & Human Rites' and 'Searching Out Kindred Spirits'.]

[Today's concern for the well-being of animals] has an Oriental^[1] expression, a logic by which rights of creatures, so frustrating in their semantic and practical aspects, can be serenely refined to the purity of nonkilling. A recent example of this view was Albert Schweitzer, who, combining St. Augustine^[2] with Hindu Jainism^[3], was devoted to the protection from death or injury of all life, however minute or inconspicuous. Schweitzer's "reverence for life" was an endless chain of excruciating decisions in all things medical and horticultural. **His unshakable conviction of the rights of life over death and of the priority of human value did not mitigate his sombre sense of judgement and responsibility.** For him, too, the care of life was associated with giving shelter. He kept captive a small menagerie of wild animals so that he could admire them. As among all wild captives made into pets, these animals were amputated from their gene pool and from fellow creatures and habitat; no amount of loving care could prevent them from becoming neurotic and flabby monsters.

Schweitzer's impulse to "extend to all all that respect which we have to our own," however much influenced by Eastern thought, is clearly related to Western humanitarian social justice. **It was part of the colonial mind, a kind of obligation to those "less fortunate" on a scale where rank is confirmed as much by responsibility as privilege. Charity has always had something of the readiness to be resigned to a status quo [ed. – and indeed this was borne out in Schweitzer's paternalistic conduct towards the recipients of his 'aid' in the colonies, despite his critical filibuster].** That the relationship between nonhuman species should require human intervention, though as old as the old "dominion" precepts in Genesis [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg40*], could only be acted upon by those who knew themselves to be the instruments of God's will. Even so, Schweitzer is no exception to the general sense of alienation that preoccupied European philosophy and literature at the time [1920's-30's], for it was a strategy in which humanism and technology combined to prove human transcendence.

[...] Apprehension of connectedness to nature is precisely the weakness of Western ethics. Marriage and diet are the universal means and symbols of relationship. [...] In the cynegetic [hunting-gathering] view the world is an exquisitely elaborated comity laced through with eating habits, the most conspicuous and important threads of connection and significance. When one senses, however momentarily, that experience of a world of beings which it produces, the loneliness of modern humankind can be seen as an ecological as much as a social phenomenon. No one could be lonely in a world so richly populated.

[...] Diversity and kinship of life not only include the fact of death but require it.

Causing death – requiring it in order to live – pricks our conscience. In the city, it is possible to hire professionals who hide the death in the slaughterhouse. But in the world at large, the hunt must be faced. [...] Among traditional hunters, intelligent quarry are the most prized and respected. **Animals are not classified into levels of significance that excuse the killing of "lower" forms and preserve the "higher."** Instead, it is just those great sensitive beasts – aurochs, horses, elephants, and bears – that are most appropriately killed and most deeply revered. Where we seem the consumption of animals as participation in the transfer of energy, as do traditional hunters, they also see it as the movement of an endless spiritual flow. To live and to die is to be surrounded by beings whose coming and going are intrinsic to life itself.

[...] The crucial moment in the hunt is not the "taking" of a life but the moment of respect and affirmation for a giving world. [...] **In the hunt, we focus our attention on the mystery of life-giving substance – a substance available only in death (whether that of plants or animals). ["Rights" and "ethics"] are pale, rational-legalistic concepts. In the case of the hunt, such socially defined concerns are wholly inadequate.** In killing, some people try to work down the scale of life as they imagine it – from big, smart animals to the mindless fish – hoping at last to eradicate the butchering of bodies like their own. This frantic perpetuation of life is deeply inorganic, a denial of our own bodies.

It is, in truth, a denial of every aspect of our nature. We are each porous, actively exchanging with the world at large [ed. – see *Symbiogenetic Desire*]. What we take in – and not only as physical food – becomes some aspect of the self. Perceptually, animals constitute elements of the potential self as it grows. **In their taxonomy, animals provide us with the concrete reality of categories of existence. In our dreams, they model for us – as reflected in our childhood mimicry in dance and play – our vast range of feelings.**

The great miscalculation is to say, "Welcome all births, save all lives." Compassionate on the surface, its effect is to destroy life, in the long perspective causing more havoc than does ordinary malevolence. The alternative is not an ascetic otherworldliness that will "deny birth and welcome death." Instead, it is as if one were to say, "Celebrate new life as provisional, affirm that death will balance the scale, and accept that human beings are part of the whole."

Regardless of food habits, everything from protozoa to tigers incorporates other life to live – other life that must be searched out and must die. All are hunted in turn. The great predatory carnivores demonstrate it most plainly, but even they, in the end, are pursued by microbes, fungi, and plant roots. [...] Like all human activity, hunting can run amok – in both killing and estrangement. **We all know of the modern abuse of hunting protocol, the secular trivialization of killing. [...] We are easily seduced by our own empathy because of our fear and outrage at the indifferent destructiveness around us.** However, kindness towards animals demands a true sense of kinship. To be kindred does not mean that we should treat animals as our babies. It means instead a sense of many connections and transformations – us into them, them into us, and them into each other from the beginning of time. To be kindred means to share consciously in the stream of life.

1. ed. – Western fascination with, projection onto, but ultimately patronising of aspects in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian cultures; famously a thrust of 19th century European art and literature.

2. ed. – St. Augustine (354-430), Roman African, early Christian theologian from Numidia, influential on Western philosophy, and helped formulate the doctrine of original sin (to be remedied by the restraint of law on humans).

3. ed. – From the same author: "The Buddhists' contemporaries and fellow travelers, the Jains, famous for ahimsa (harmlessness), are familiarly portrayed moving insects from the footpath. But this is not because they love life or nature. The Jains are revolted by participation in the living stream and want as little as possible to do with the organic bodies, which are like tar pits, trapping and suffocating the soul. Historically, it would appear that both Buddhists and Jains got something from the Aryans, who brought their high-flying, earth-escaping gods from Middle East pastoralism. In the face of these invasions, the Hindus and their unzipped polytheism [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg41*] survived best in the far south of India, where the Western monotheists penetrated least. At a more practical level, everywhere the "world" religions have gone the sacred forests, springs, and other "places" and their wild inhabitants have vanished. The disappearance of respect for local earth-shrines is virtually a measure of the impact of the otherworldly beliefs."

'AT THE ROOT OF MY SURVIVAL'

[ed. – The comrade Tortuga interviewed here was badly injured going into action. His right hand and three fingers of the left were amputated as a result, dozens of skin grafts were done, and (at least to begin with) his sight seriously damaged. While he was in intensive care on the verge of death, and the mother of his daughter raided and put in the media, Tortuga's own family denounced his ideas and way of life, freely telling police of his social circles. In letters that he composed while imprisoned, Tortuga brought up the consequences of struggle in the era of a global politics of 'anti-terrorism' – as well as more timelessly – in a way that bears reflecting on. "I will not deny that things were difficult, because there were days dark as the depths of the sea, when everything was crumbling around me, my life as I had constructed it went to shit. But this helped me, with the pain caused, to learn that all this I had built I had not made sufficiently solidly as to endure the praxis of my discourse. [If family, friends, comrades and lovers took off flying,] many thought that it would be better for me to just sink alone before I would take more people down with me, since they believe that I would never get back up from this, if all these people underestimated me because in their smallness they thought that they themselves wouldn't be able to stand such a fall as mine, today they are not at my side, it is only for their mediocrity, because know this: I do not lack the affection to forgive them, after everything, not one of us was prepared for this. [...] And it is that on this occasion I can contribute with some examples, through which I encourage other comrades to share their experiences, since the possibilities of struggle are infinite, madness, rape, exile, mutilation, victory, torture, clandestinity, laughter, imprisonment, pain, betrayal, amnesia, dependency, beatings, humiliation, death, all of these, none, others, and so many more, and how many of the warriors in the street today who fight against power and its designs know this? That is, how prepared are we to assume the costs of the social war if we do not know these kinds of things? Can we speak of not repenting without having all this in consideration? [T]o be recognized as an enemy of authority is not easy, less so when you are labeled as a terrorist in the media, your social environment is affected almost unanimously[...] few are the brave who dare to remain with you. **Public opinion does its work and through all the possible methods the system tries to isolate you.** They don't have to get their hands dirty with the death penalty anymore, these days the methods are more sophisticated and democratic [ed. – see **Who Is It?**]; they make your life cease to have meaning because they distance you from everything that you are a part of. And they don't just do this physically by getting you in a cage, but also psychologically to reduce your convictions. They demonize you collectively, they erase the memory of what you once were and they transform you into a television case, in a failed explosive attack, in a bank robbery with a policeman killed, or into a member of a phantasmic terrorist organization. You are that, you are your letter of presentation, to such an extent that if you don't become aware that you are much more than what the press says. **You end up believing it[...]** your days no longer have the sense they did before, you are worth nothing and you have ruined the lives of everyone around you – why keep existing? Why cause more pain? They no longer need to stain their hands with your blood; please, we are civilized people, instead they incite you to finish yourself off[...]. This is the hidden discourse that reproduces our shiny Chilean democracy; there are no longer any revolutionaries, now they minimize us as mere terrorists, because clearly a revolutionary is someone with feelings, with ideas, love of freedom and a companion of the oppressed: that is, someone worth imitating. Instead the terrorist is a shadow with impunity who has no heart and is obsessed with the use of violence due to past childhood traumas – **so how to face this situation?** [...] I took my time, I went as slow as a turtle, I exercised every day without a break, whether it was cold or hot, I was disciplined with myself, and it was a question of practice, patience and perseverance (the 3 "P"s like I told you) [and well,] here I am, look at me one year after the bombing that almost killed me. Who said that I would bite the mud of humiliation forever? Who said that I would be defeated for the rest of my life? Who said that the struggle does not make us great? If my ideas can bring me to lose my life, they can also bring me to recover it, that was always my gamble..." **Tortuga is serving six years of 'supervised freedom'.** On preparing for and surviving prison more generally, for those in the U.K. (especially those at risk of being gendered 'female' by State classification) we recommend 'Bang-Up & Smash' by ASBO, free online.]

The Ex-Worker Podcast: Who are we speaking with today, and where are we?

Tortuga: With Luciano Pitronello, *el Tortuga*, and we're in the self-managed social center and autonomous library Sante Geronimo Caserio.

Ex-Worker: And how long has the space been around? Is it new?

Tortuga: Yes, it's new. It's been 3 or 4 months since we got here and started setting things up, and it's been just a month and a half that we've been able to open the doors to the public.

Ex-Worker: Have you heard that there's a book of your prison letters translated into English in the United States?

Tortuga: Yeah, I mean... I heard because you told me like a second ago, but it's still a surprise.

Ex-Worker: For those who haven't read the book, can you give us a brief summary of your case, and if you have an idea of what the book covers, what's in the book and in your letters?

Tortuga: Well, I transported a low-power bomb by hand to a branch of the Santander Bank in the early morning of June 1st, 2011 [in Santiago, Chile], around 2:30 in the morning, more or less. Due to the premature detonation of the device, I was injured in my hands, my eyes, and my skin, because a certain percent ended up burnt. Afterward I spent about three months in a hospital, and then two more months in intensive care, but at that point I was no longer imprisoned, I had been moved to my mother's house. From there I was charged

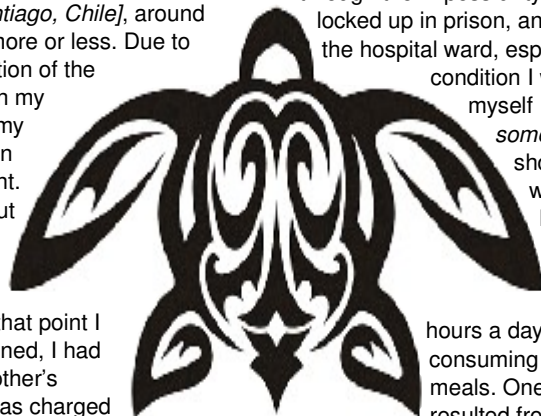
under the anti-terrorist law and I ended up imprisoned in the hospital ward of Concesionada Prison, Santiago 1, because of the multiple injuries my body had sustained.

From this regimen, which was a pretty difficult place to be since it wasn't designed for somebody to be there permanently, but rather was a ward designed to receive prisoners or new arrestees as a kind of clinic, like for after somebody gets into a fight with another prisoner or after getting beat by the guards, after getting stabbed, or for people with illnesses that are easily treatable... so living there was, pretty... well, it wasn't very normal. So it was there that I had to get used to the idea of living in that situation.

The first few months of my incarceration passed, and after the visit of a loving comrade I got ready to write my first letter, and at the root of this was that my friend adviseme that the silence surrounding my situation was not a good sign for the rest of our comrades. Basically from there I wrote the first letter, about 7 months after the failed attack, which is entitled 'Letter to the Indomitable Hearts', which was published the 5th of January, 2012 if I recall correctly.

After this would come a second letter, which would be a gesture of support and solidarity with Freddy Fuentesvilla, Marcelo Villarroel [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo Villarroel Sepulveda**], and Juan Aliste Vega, who at that time were in the middle of an international week of agitation and support for their case. And we should remember that just recently these three were convicted [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg52**] in the *Caso Security* and the death of the police corporal Luis Moyano and the injuries of another police officer. But before then they spent many many years in prison [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg72**], and ever since I came to realize that prison is a kind of passage for any combatant or comrade who takes "*the idea*" [of anarchism] seriously, they've been in my everyday thoughts.

So the way that I made myself present in trying to express solidarity with them, through the impossibility of being locked up in prison, and above all in the hospital ward, especially in the condition I was in, I told myself I would do *something* to show solidarity, which basically consisted of refusing to eat for 20 hours a day and consuming two small meals. One of my letters resulted from this time,



which I suppose is in the book... but in reality I haven't seen the book so I don't know if all the letters actually do appear, but I hope they do!

Well, this was the February of 2012. Afterward there was a week of agitation in solidarity with me, which started on the 20th of March, which I believe is the day that my trial began, or the preparations for trial – I don't quite remember anymore⁽¹⁾. What I do remember is that the day I entered the prison was the 22nd of November, of 2011.

So the months went by, and I wrote a third letter, a third communiqué, which as I understand it is the most valuable in terms of wanting to pass on a little of the experience of being in prison, that in reality wasn't much time, and might not be the experience that all comrades have in prison. So in this third effort I wrote a communiqué at one year on from the failed bombing that affected me, which is entitled 'The Abyss Does Not Stop Us'.

In there I basically offer three reflections. The first is about prison. The second is about what it means morally, socially, even emotionally, to be charged as a terrorist, or as an enemy of the state, which is what happened to me. And the third is more specifically about my case, and deals with the subject of mutilation, to have one's body reduced physically; this is the theme. I try to cover each of these three themes from two perspectives: the first being a general manner, how to understand the problem in general terms, and the second being from my own subjectivity, how I see things, how I felt in certain moments... how I confronted things, basically.

In this third letter I also responded to the proposal [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg44*] from the comrades in Greece of the International Revolutionary Front and the Informal Anarchist Federation. **I conclude that at the root of my survival was the solidarity that the comrades showed me.** Because in every one of these three processes – being locked up in prison, being charged as a terrorist or enemy of the state, and becoming disabled – in every one of these processes I was gripped by this weapon that we have as anarchists, which is solidarity.

Ex-Worker: Were there any other prisoners who inspired you to carry on during your time in prison, either through their words or writings or deeds?

Tortuga: Yes, definitely. When I was locked up I discovered the story of Marcela Rodriguez, who was a militant for the MAPU Lautaro [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo*

“Able-embodiment is temporary, conditional, and under direct assault by the pollutions and economic obstructions leaving your health to chance and a function of your zip code. [...] I think the impulse to burn it all down or to retreat to the wilderness and find some long ago purged part of ourselves there or to die trying are feelings we all move through. [I]t is critical that we think as disabled people, even if we momentarily experience able-embodiment. As climate health worsens, our own health worsens too. How will we replace industrialized medicine, or rob the healthcare industry of the power to profiteer off our disabilities? How will we grow and manufacture our own pharmacies? How will we reclaim our bodies, our narratives, our medicines, and our assistance tech from capitalism? In our utopian futures, healthcare is a community function, and the health of the commons is where that value plants its roots. Beyond the medical model, how too will we create sustainable communities structured in such a way to weather not only climate change but the physical changes of human experience? How will we modify our communities to account for multiple modes of accessibility, and to treat soil health, air quality, water potability, tree health, animal health, and human health as one holistic equation? [...] Other disabled people have other types of needs. Others have different forms of mobility, sensory experience, and physicality. Disability is wide-ranging and diverse in scale. Our experience of life is marked both by hyper-visibility and invisibility, social stigma, and the embodiment of difference. Whereas one may argue that other forms of prejudice can be resolved by changing social attitudes about their focus, changing attitudes towards disability will not resolve difference. Prejudice isn't the cause of lost limbs, deafness, malfunctioning organs, etc. And while capitalism is undoubtedly exploiting the health and life out of disabled people everywhere and informing ableism particularly in relation to employability and worker efficiency, neither is capitalism the cause of disability. Disability is rather an experience of being human. As we age, our bodies break down on the way to death. As we experience the wildness of life, disability becomes us. As we are born, our bodies map an orgy of natural physicalities innate to human biology, mind and flesh, inside and out. The eugenicist and capitalist fallacy of the perfect worker is a dark magic spell freak witches and wizards everywhere have been disabling.”

– *Our Disabled and Climate-Changed Futures*

Villaruel Sepulveda], who received the impact of a bullet on her spine during one of the Lautaro's operations. On the 14th of November, 1990 they were trying to rescue a political prisoner, Marco Ariel Antonioletti, from a hospital. In this operation the Lautaro killed 4 prison guards by a small bomb, and a cop went down too. The cop wasn't really in the plans, let's say, and it was he who fired the shot that left our *compañera* [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg34*] paraplegic. After she received the impact of the bullet, the group rescued Antonioletti and carried the two of them off to a truck. Just a few minutes later, the radio announces that there was a woman with Marcela's features involved in the escape, but with the damage to her spine they had to take her back to the very same hospital they had rescued Antonioletti from. She went to prison, of course, after being operated on and put in a wheelchair, and continued fighting.

Her story is really comforting because she spent 12 years in the San Miguel Prison, in the hospital section. When I found out this story, which I found out through a book called 'Rebellion, Subversion, & Political Imprisonment', written by Pedro Rosas, who also ended up prisoner in the High Security Prison (CAS) for MIR [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg73*] guerrilla activity.

And it's a heavy story, because for political prisoners in Chile to be able to achieve privileges like leaving the prison for certain amounts of time, visiting other parts of the prison, and other benefits, they have to undergo a lot of mobilization: hunger strikes, rebellions... Here in Chile between 2000 and 2004 there was strong agitation by and for political prisoners. So Marcela Rodriguez, who was like the symbol of what nobody in society should ever be like – because she was a woman, an armed woman who robbed banks, who would carry a machine gun where she went (that's what they called her actually, the "Machine Gun Woman") – she was photographed in MAPU Lautaro operations, basically they wanted her head, they wanted her as a trophy. So the pressure on the government to allow this terrorist to leave prison, to be on the street, put them in an uncomfortable position. Eventually, what they offer her is extradition. Now, what is extradition? Basically, it's forced exile. Marcela Rodriguez is free in any part of the world except Chile. The powerful part of the story is Marcela ends up accepting asylum (which isn't truly asylum) in Italy, with her wheelchair and all. A woman who can't even move around just by herself winds up being more dangerous than all these other folks. It's crazy, this story!

And when she leaves prison the reporters go crazy because she was always this press magnet. They try to record her in the airport, and the last image of her in Chile is of Marcela in her wheelchair, crossing the border immigration guards to board the plane, raising her fist and shouting “la lucha continua” – the struggle continues.

When I found out this story, I said “I can’t give up, man. If she could do it like that, I can’t give up here.” That’s also how the story of Savvas Xiros is, from the 17th of November organization in Greece. In 2002, he was injured by a failed bomb and ended up in circumstances similar to my own. But lamentably, he is going to spend many years in prison, because he is part of a terrorist organization... well in reality it’s not terrorist but revolutionary, and they’ve been operating for 29 years. So the luck that Savvas Xiros had, the luck of Marcela Rodriguez is truly cruel



because at the heart of it they both have disability and prison as their destiny, yet even with this heavy baggage they are capable of continuing to struggle.

So I look at myself and I see that I can still go on, and so I can’t give up, man! So for me, these *compañeros* are a compass, they’re my north; they’ve shown the way because they’ve raised the bar to where I have to meet it. It might be a strange way to look at it, but that’s really how I see it. Like that. [Tortuga went on to describe a prisoner support project that he’s involved in, and his perspectives of the significance of prisoners and solidarity among anarchists and antagonists in Chile.]

Tortuga: Projects of support for comrades in prison... there’s the project I was telling you about – the solidarity raffle, which is organized by a group of folks and what we do is give away prizes in the form of a raffle in order to collect some funds, even though it may not be a ton, for our comrades in prison. This is an event that happens every month. Every month we look for an event where we can hold the raffle, and we assemble a schedule of events on our webpage, can I give it to you?

Ex-Worker: Yes, please!

Tortuga: It’s rifasolidaria.wordpress.com. Basically the idea is generate a steady stream of funds which, like I said, isn’t a ton but it’s at least a small effort to show

our comrades that they’re not alone. I’ve also seen on the internet some communiqués from an anti-prison collective “Vuelo de Justicia” (“Flight of Justice”, named after an incredible prison break in 1996, look it up!) And as I understand it, although I don’t know a ton, this collective has been pretty active looking after lots of the comrades in prison. There’s also a website for a periodical that also gets printed, which is called ‘Publicacion Refractario’. It’s well known, and also has a pretty internationalist character; it’s very good. They’re always publishing updates about the comrades in prison, developments in their case, legal work that the comrades have to face, and material for supporting a comrade if they should get imprisoned.

Ex-Worker: In the anarchist movement, here in Chile and more broadly, what role does prisoner support play?

Tortuga: According to my way of thinking about this topic, here in Chile there is no movement.

There are basically individuals that struggle, each in their own rhythm and pulse, in their own particular and unique ways, but there isn’t a... I don’t know how to say it... there isn’t a movement, so to speak. There’s convergence, gathering points, but beyond this... it’s difficult to say.

Because unfortunately, and I don’t like to say it, there’s a lot of people just here for fashion. They’re around because politics is a means to other things: to find friends, to find romantic partners, to feel a sense of belonging, to feel like you’re part of something. So sometimes you can find comrades who are super excited, very involved, but at the end of the day it only lasts for a year, a year and a half.

Repression comes down and they run. I believe that to call something a movement it has to be something that moves you; it’s something that can maintain itself against repression, and when there’s not repression, onward!

So I don’t believe there is a movement here. What no one can deny is that there are communities in struggle, which is different to me. This social center for me is a community of struggle. The Sacco and Vanzetti [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg86*] library is, for me, a community of struggle. For me, the squat Isla Tortuga is a community of struggle. Regardless of the forms of how each community or group involves themselves – their form, their rhythm, their pulse – we have different ways of going about things, but you can’t

deny that these people, these spaces are fighting back. This is something you can’t lie about..

Coming back to your question – support for prisoners, the way I see it, has deteriorated. It has deteriorated because the anarchists here in Chile, or the anti authoritarians, the nihilists, the revolutionaries, however you want to call them, are encountering prison as something pretty new in our lives. In general the anarchist “movement” in Chile is very new². I mean, *Caso Bombas* [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg73*] demonstrated this. When police raided a few squats, everybody ran for cover, everyone hid their face. This shows you how unstable the movement was, evidenced by how unprepared we were to live through prison, and even less prepared to confront it. Through this you can see that in a lot of cases that you might say “good, they’re getting support” or “they’re getting attention” but obviously something is missing. **Something is missing like...**

Why are we appealing to show that cases were frame ups? Why do our comrades stay silent? Or like, why don’t we ever stand up to the judges? And I include myself, I criticize the way I’ve gone about things too. Why do we appeal to innocence? Why do we accept the way we’re treated?

There’s a ton of things that we might not always be capable of confronting. So for example I see, well I don’t want to idealize anything, but I think it’s worth understanding that Greece is a little more advanced, at least in terms of history, and in Greece it’s a different conversation. The comrades there confront these issues in a different manner. So if you’re over there and looking at the situation here... well here, if in Greece they’re walking upright, we’re crawling on all fours. Of course throughout the world there are other places where there aren’t even comrades, where there isn’t anything going on. But it’s important to keep in mind how recent all of this is here, to understand how much further we have to go. But I’m not satisfied with crawling, I want to gallop, I want to run, I want to fly. And for this, you have to work.

Ex-Worker: Three questions in one: after your time in prison how has your orientation to anarchist strategy changed? And I don’t mean which acts or tactics are more important, but I’m speaking about the anarchist project in general. How has your orientation changed and what tasks do you think are most important? OK, that’s one; secondly, what would you say to someone considering risking their freedom to do something, like taking direct action? And what would you say to someone who would never consider that, who just want to live a life of safety and comfort, but who are still anarchists?

Tortuga: Well, this reply may disappoint you a little, but my outlook hasn't actually drastically changed. I still hold the same beliefs that I did on the first of June in 2011, you know? For me, there isn't some big difference between a comrade who carries a bomb in their backpack or one who carries a book. For me, both tools, when aimed directly at the bowels of power, can achieve the same task. **It's all the same for me if a comrade carries a submachine gun or carries a microphone. To me what is central is where the attack is directed towards. The tool you utilize is a question of comfort and familiarity, it's a question of whether you feel satisfied with what you're doing: to feel pleasure basically, to feel good and that what you're doing is the right thing.** If you feel like the thing to do is publish a newspaper – great! Then I'm happy for you. If what you think is needed nowadays is to attack capital in some direct manner – all right then, do it! But for me, what upsets me is knowing that something needs to be done and not doing it. In there I see a contradiction in my way of understanding the struggle.

So my way of responding to your question wouldn't be to say that we'll have a better revolution by having more of one thing, or that one thing is better than another... I don't know, the library, doing workshops, direct attacks, expropriations: to me these all have the same worth, there isn't one that's more valuable than another. If you

can defend what you're doing with enough passion, then it's alright with me.

And what would I say to the comrades who want to carry out direct action, or who are carrying out direct action? Well... I know that if somebody is listening to this they're just listening, they can't make a case out of my words alone, but whatever. I would say to *be careful, take care*. For me its like they say, you've got to face reality, but you've got to take care. You have to give yourself time to plan well.

For the anarchists, or the nihilists or the revolutionaries, what we have plenty of is heart. But war isn't won with heart alone. We need to use a little more prudence – so the action won't be today, it will be tomorrow but it will also be better. It will be better planned, more focused on the safety of those involved, and other small details that I don't know if I can pass on here. But like I've written, one mistake, one small neglect can change everything. And we are far too valuable to be needlessly putting ourselves at risk. **I think my most focused advice today would be, more than anything, that this comrade value herself [sic], that she not feel like her life is just a material contribution to the struggle. I would tell this comrade to value herself a little more, that she give herself time and room to breathe.** That's all, that the struggle is for your whole life, it won't change by waiting one more night.

To the comrades who would never think of focusing their struggle on direct action, I would respond with basically the first points I made about fighting in an illegal manner – because I'm using the vocabulary of power, which is a contradiction, but, well, what can we do? Life is a contradiction itself! Well, OK, it doesn't matter if somebody doesn't want to confront power with a gun or a bomb. Getting involved in a newspaper or something, that's fine, but I think **the important thing to understand is that prison, death, clandestinity, having to go to battle are things that don't only face the comrades who pick up a weapon.** In the dictatorship here, unfortunately it was a struggle of fire and blood. To have had a newspaper, a printing press, just copying a flyer would mean torture, possibly even death. So in this sense, if you're not going to use a gun, that's fine by me. What's most important to me is that you can defend your project and your idea.

Ex-Worker: Anything more for our listeners, the *gringos* of the north, or the rest of the English-speaking world?

Tortuga: Keep it up, Seattle May Day!!!



Mayday 2012, Seattle, U.S.A

EL TORTUGA - poem for Luciano

[ed. – From 325 magazine #9, near the time of his wounding.]

we stand, el tortuga,
steady and strong,
held like all the people
before us and beside us,
on the turtles back

your shell catches our tears
of joy, of sorrow,
fresh hollow-ways down
which we slide
into new worlds,
delighted as children,
carving deeper into freedom
with every thought of you

we do not know you,
yet we feel you, brother,
and we felt each moment

we send you the deep valleys,
the falcons calling across blue
sky
the sunsets which pour light
into the hills
like evening wine into
vermillion cups

we send you the strike of a
match,

the midnight routes,
the anarchist plots hatched
amongst
the looking-glass swamps
and embroidered trees
the joy of a bulls-eye on a
paper wall

we send you our vision with
which we also
walk into a future we cannot
clearly see

you walked strong and blind,
injured but unbowed
by the flames you set against
the enemy
and we lend you our own
hands
setting their own flames
against the same enemy

we share with you
the stealth of the night air
which only the saboteur
knows,
guided by owls through the
underworld,
the scent of dark grass, the
cooling concrete,
the quiet dust,
the moonlit stench
of abandoned alleyways,
the startled thwack of wings in
the trees,
that spectacular, lonely wind

exhilarating determined skin
the sudden flame in the dark
el tortuga, we too know the
feel
of those guerilla nights
when only the present moment
exists,
when only war walks masked
through the sullen, daring
streets,
provoking sunrise
and the awakening of life into
the promise of a better day
than today

those nights are ours too
and in our sleeplessness,
we send you our dreams
remember, el tortuga,
if you are held now in the
hands of our
jailers, you are held more
tightly
in the hearts of your comrades,
known and unknown,

and for those of us who accept
that we will all, in the end,
be burnt by our own fire,
we take strength from the fact
that
even in flames you did not
kneel.

WILD PLANTS –

Hawthorne (berries) & Sweet Chestnuts



Hawthorne (berries)

This medium-sized deciduous tree prefers moist, alkaline soil and full sun (but is tolerant of most soils), and lives to a great age. They are often planted as dense hedgerows to enclose land, as their thorny boughs make a sturdy barrier; an old Cornish expression is "thick as haglets" (the Cornish name for hawthorne), and the branches have a history in Mayday rituals. These trees will also be found in woodlands (especially at the edges) and on waysides.

There are many dangerous red berries, so make sure you identify hawthorne correctly (use a guide or someone whose experience you trust). The fruit (which ripens through September) is a bright red to dark purple, and also enjoyed by many birds. The texture when ripe is akin to the texture of avocado. The seeds must not be eaten because they produce cyanide in the intestines; a couple aren't deadly to an adult but could be to a child. You can cook the berries then discard the seeds, or just eat around them raw. The taste is like starchy over-ripe apple, and while some are tasty enough to use in their own right, their high pectin content makes them popular to add to other fruit that you want to jelly; just-ripe berries have the most pectin, over-ripe berries the least.

Here in Britain hawthorne is one of our real medicinal treasure-trove plants. Traditionally, this plant was used to treat hypertension and cardiac failure. Both of these are prevalent killers in western societies, especially Britain. In diverse places such as Devon, the Isle of Man, and the Highlands of Scotland, hawthorne has traditionally been used in folk medicine as a primary heart tonic, as well as being used for centuries to correctly balance high and low blood pressure (it's actually a beta blocker, improving nutrition, energy reserves, and energy release of the heart muscle). The berries are astringent and useful to cure sore throats once they've been cooked in water for a while. It may also break calcium and cholesterol deposits in the arteries, making it helpful for arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). It's also rich in Vitamin C and anti-oxidants, promoting the scavenging of harmful 'free radical' molecules.

At this time of year, there tend not to be as many thorns as earlier in the season and any still present grow at a 45 degree angle away from the trunk. The advantage of this is that you can run your hand along a branch from base to tip and collect a good handful of berries with very few prickles.

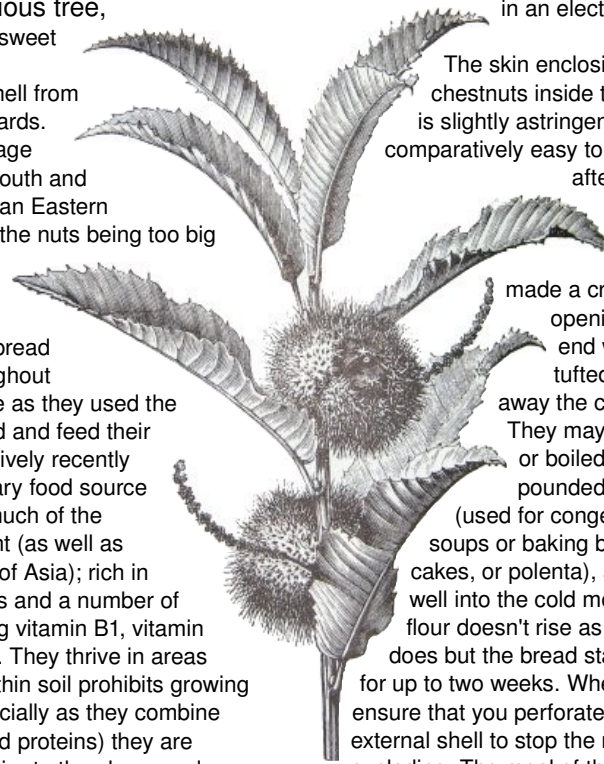
As well as eating or stewing, you can mash them through your hands to remove the seeds (although very time-consuming) and then dry out the paste into a sweet fruit leather that will keep for years.

Due to their association with fairies, it has been considered very bad fortune to cut hawthorne. Especially in Celtic mythology, myth abounds of humans being laylaid by such creatures to places where time passes differently. Into this century in Ireland, public works have been diverted due to reluctance to tamper with this tree.

Sweet Chestnuts

Another deciduous tree, the nuts fall from sweet chestnut in their densely-spiked shell from mid-October onwards. After the last ice-age forced the trees south and stranded them in an Eastern European valley (the nuts being too big for birds or the wind to disseminate), the Roman Empire spread them again throughout temperate Europe as they used the nut to make bread and feed their horses. Until relatively recently they were a primary food source for rural poor in much of the southern continent (as well as Turkey and parts of Asia); rich in starch, natural oils and a number of vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B2 and vitamin C. They thrive in areas where the rocky, thin soil prohibits growing grains, and (especially as they combine carbohydrates and proteins) they are nutritionally superior to the above and can replace them in the diet.

There is records of chestnuts being used in western medicine as far back as the ancient Greeks. Eating them not only will improve the blood (in atrophy, fatigue, starvation) but also will increase the energy and it will supply the body with natural sugars that will squeeze out the desire for sweets (though they're not recommended more than 4-5 times a week) and the high dietary fibre can prevent diabetes and improve digestion. It will also balance cholesterol, decrease inflammation all through the body, and lower the risk of blood clots building up in the body. This will eventually lower your risk of stroke, heart attack and coronary heart disease to a large degree. The magnesium present in sweet chestnut forms the hard enamel around your teeth



and protects the bones from degeneration and decay. The B vitamins also strengthen the nerves. Once dried, with both the casing and the inner skin removed, the nuts can be beaten into a powder reputed to cure coughs when combined with honey in an electuary.

The skin enclosing the chestnuts inside the casing is slightly astringent, but comparatively easy to remove after brief blanching after you have made a cross opening at the end which is tufted to peel away the casing. They may be roasted or boiled or pounded into flour (used for congealing soups or baking breads and cakes, or polenta), and store well into the cold months. The flour doesn't rise as wheat flour does but the bread stays fresh for up to two weeks. When roasting, ensure that you perforate the external shell to stop the nuts exploding. The meal of the chestnut has also been used for whitening linen cloth and for making starch. The Marones variety contains 15%, and by expression yield a thick syrup, from which in turn a very usable sugar can be derived.

The nuts have a history of eating to encourage fertility and sexual desire and may be carried as a charm by women who wish to conceive. Staves made from chestnut wood are said to encourage longevity, increase energy, enhance intuition and help with grounding and centering of energy. In Japan (where they are eaten on New Year's day for success and strength the coming year) they symbolise both difficulties and overcoming them.

**English-language
anarchist news &
information exchange**

Act For Freedom Now! (Greece
& global) actforfree.nostate.net

Anarchist Library (multi-lingual, open-
source catalogue of print-ready texts)
theanarchistlibrary.org

Anarchy, Secession, Subsistence
(rejoining rebellion with the land)
anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca

Anarchy Radio (streaming and
downloadable hour of global news and
anti-civilisation analysis, every Tuesday)
johnzerzan.net/radio

Avalanche (web presence of
international correspondence publication
about and from sites of social tension;
each edition available multi-lingual)
avalanche.noblogs.org

Attaque (France, multi-lingual)
attaque.noblogs.org

Bordered by Silence (France)
borderedbysilence.noblogs.org

Chronik (Germany, multi-lingual)
chronik.blackblogs.org

Contra Info (global, multi-lingual)
contrainfo.espiiv.net

Montreal Counter-Information
(Canada, bi-lingual)
mtlcounter-info.org/en

Non-Fides (France & global, multi-
lingual) non-fides.fr

Oplopanax Publishing (a cache of
handsome and engaging printable zines)
oplopanaxpublishing.wordpress.com

Resonance Audio Distro (various
readings as MP3s plus source files)
resonanceaudiodistro.wordpress.com

The Brilliant Podcast (deeply
thoughtful questioning on key topics for
radicals) thebrilliant.org

Uncivilized Animals (writings on
ecology, technology and society from an
anti-industrial perspective)
uncivilizedanimals.wordpress.com

Untorelli Press (an archive and
publisher of radical pamphlets against
capitalism, patriarchy, the state and
civilisation) untorellipress.noblogs.org

Warrior Up (sabotage techniques)
warriorup.noblogs.org

**sources if not already cited:
(anonymous if unlisted)**

inside front – Emile Armand

Who Is It?
– by Adonide

Veganism: Why Not
– by Peter Gelderloos

“Long live
the weeds
and the
wilderness
yet.”

Articles referenced by title throughout this
chapter in **[square brackets]** which do
not appear in the previous pages appear
in the other chapters of this volume.

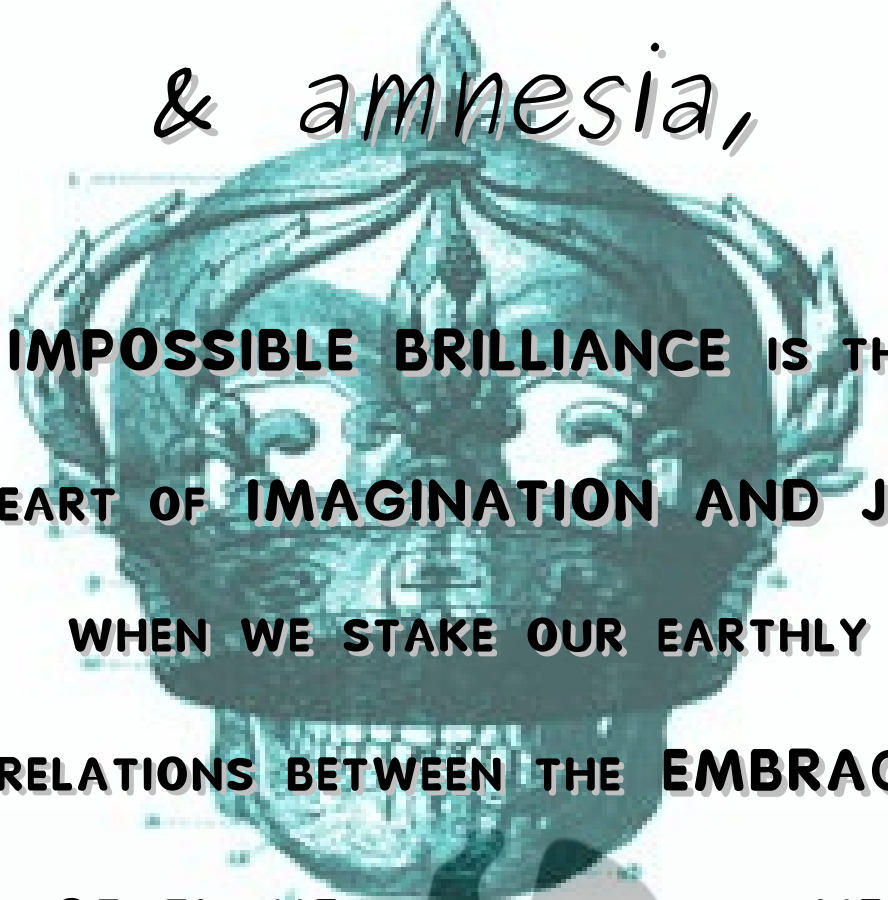
– Inversnaid



**PDFs of this chapter, other
chapters of the same volume or
previous volumes of Return
Fire and related publications:
actforfree.nostate.net
/?tag=return-fire**



*beyond control
& amnesia,*



**IMPOSSIBLE BRILLIANCE IS THE
HEART OF IMAGINATION AND JOY
WHEN WE STAKE OUR EARTHLY
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EMBRACE
OF FLUXES WE ARE AND THE
EXPERIENCE OF SELF AT OUR
CORE .**

NOWHERE LESS

OTHER STORIES HAVE FAILED US



A photograph of a forest floor. In the foreground, a young tree sapling with bright green, serrated leaves is growing from a dark, charred log. The ground is covered with a thick layer of dry pine needles and twigs. In the background, there are large green ferns and a dense forest of tall, thin trees under a clear blue sky.

returnfire@riseup.net