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Interview with Layla AbdelRahim on anarcho-primitivism, red anarchism and veganism

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Interview via Czech Green Anarchy

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We contacted Layla AbdelRahim and asked her to answer our questions. Layla willingly responded and her answers are really comprehensive.

Who is Layla AbdelRahim? from Wikipedia: *Layla AbdelRahim is a Canadian comparatist anthropologist and author, whose works on narratives of civilization and wilderness have contributed to the fields of literary and cultural studies, animal studies, philosophy, sociology, anarcho-primitivist thought, epistemology, and critique of civilization and education. She attributes the collapse in the diversity of bio-systems and environmental degradation to monoculturalism and the civilized ontology that explains existence in terms of anthropocentric utilitarian functions.*

Her books Children's Literature, Domestication, and Social Foundation: Narratives of Civilization and Wilderness

(Routledge 2013) and Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education[4] (Fernwood 2013) make a contribution to children’s literary theory and a critique of education as rooted in the civilized need for the domestication of children as resources.

AbdelRahim received her A.B. from Bryn Mawr College and a Ph.D. from the Université de Montréal, Department of Comparative Literature. Her dissertation entitled *Order and the Literary Rendering of Chaos: Children’s Literature as Knowledge, Culture, and Social Foundation*, examines the effect of ontological premises on human self-knowledge (anthropology) and the repercussions of such knowledge on the anthropogenic destruction of the world’s life systems and diversity.

More about Layla AbdelRahim: layla.miltsov.org.

Q: How did you get to Anarcho-primitivism?

A: My ethical stance vis-à-vis other living beings was formulated before I could speak. I was born in Moscow. My Russian grandparents had a small farm in the south of the Moscow region. Seeing how they loved the animals they “raised” and the forest that surrounded the tiny village made me aware of the inherent contradiction between claiming to love someone and then killing that nonhuman person for food in cold blood. I have thus resolved at the age of four not to consume the flesh of others.

My grandparents and parents’ relationship to animals, wilderness, government, and technology was complex and they allowed me to explore and formulate my own position even while influencing my experiences while growing up. For instance, my father was a Sudanese geologist who loved wilderness. Some of the happiest memories I have of my family either go back to the Russian village or to a long sojourn in a geological camp in Darfur, when the Savannah still thrived before the geologists found the uranium mine and other “natural resources”. I remember my father critiquing the political and colonial predatory system that the discovery of these

“resources” was going to rekindle, but even as a child without the anthropological or political vocabulary, I still knew that this critique was limited to “European colonialism” versus “Sudanese national independence”, whereby the suffering of the wild animal and human tribes that lived in the area who were affected by the strife of civilisation remained unacknowledged in this narrative. I knew with all my heart though that the link between geology and mining, encroachment of civilisation and the destruction of life that I was witnessing growing up in Sudan was critical to understanding and overcoming the violence in which I grew up both on a personal and the social levels. I returned to the Darfur region less than two decades later and the life that harmoniously roamed the wilderness in the late 1960s by the early 1980s has disappeared from the Hofrat al Nihas area. There remained only sand, radiation, war, and death.

I began to articulate this link between technology, “knowledge”, and civilisation as being at the heart of the problem of the devastation of life on earth when I was in my third year of civil engineering studies. The assignments to envision roads and engineer dams revealed to me how the very concept of anthropocentric architecture was at the root of the desertification that I saw crawling from the north of Africa engulfing kilometres of fragile harmony of life surviving colonialism. War, racism, sexism, and species extinctions were obviously linked, but at the time I had not formulated my critique yet. Shortly after finishing my third year, however, I quit those studies and instead joined the efforts to help victims of war and to stop desertification, war, and extinction. This led me to journalism of war and later to my studies and research in anthropology, sociology, and comparative literature, with my real-life experiences, my childhood exposure to five languages and historical accounts, as well as my ethical stance guiding my critique of the current epistemological systems and socio-economic and environmental paradigms and praxis.

Q: Do you think that AP is real? The most common answer is, that AP is utopia, or there is no way back and also that we have so many incredible (nano)technologies, that will solve all our problems in the future, not only environmental problems, but also social problems.

A: Anarcho-primitivism is a theory and critique of hierarchical and parasitic political and socio-environmental economic systems. The arguments are based on observations of how life came about and thrived in this world for billions of years. Anarcho-primitivist critiques are different and there is no monolithic body of knowledge or “party line”: for instance, there are those who draw on hunter-gatherers, others on Christian anarchism of Leo Tolstoy or Jacques Ellul, yet others on vegan gathering traditions. Because these thinkers or critics of civilisation are interested in observing the principles of life, they draw from a variety of disciplines such as palaeontology, ethology, anthropology, biology, among others. One does not need to be an anarcho-primitivist in order to observe that the principles that allow for systems of life to thrive are based on diversity and wild relationships. By “wild” I mean “undomesticated” and existing for a purpose of their own, regardless of whether they came to exist by divine intervention or a geological accident and not for the purpose of exploitation in a “food chain”. These systems of life thrive on viable relationships where diversity is key. Anarcho-primitivist critique compares these observations of the principles of life with the principles of civilisation and hierarchical socio-environmental and economic systems. This comparison reveals that monoculturalism and domestication are not viable systems. I discuss these mechanisms in-depth in my work, particularly how the domestication of human children follows the same principles of simplification, death threat, monoculturalism, and consumption of life as that of nonhumans. You might be interested to read my theatre play where I explore these links between ontology, theology, and

10. Tuesday, 29th Elkhart, IN at noon (no FB event was made).

and the Birth of Education (Fernwood, 2013).

Links to events

Final on book tour

(<https://www.facebook.com/events/388959827898277/>

and the poster:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151663957623549&set=gm.38>

):

poster and event pages:

1. Tuesday 8th October, Kwantlen, Surrey B.C.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/235575403266795/>

2. Saturday 12th, Spartacus

<https://www.facebook.com/events/522685137805658/>

3. Sunday 13th, Purple Thistle

https://www.facebook.com/events/675007529178671/?ref=3&ref_newsfeed_

and

<https://www.facebook.com/events/675007529178671/>

4. Tuesday 15th, Camas, Victoria

<https://www.facebook.com/events/169052663280221/>

5. Wednesday 16th, Duncan Garage Room, Duncan, B.C.

<http://www.duncangarageshowroom.ca/event/layla-abdelrahim/?eID=767>

and

<https://www.facebook.com/events/206747696164527/>

6. Friday, 18th Department of Geography, University of Victoria 3pm

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1422443374638779/>

7. Tuesday, 22nd 6:30pm New Moon Collective, Olympia, WA

<https://www.facebook.com/events/580690978658664/>

8. Wednesday 23rd Black Coffee Coop, Seattle:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/347668795368906/>

9. Friday 25th RED & BLACK Café

<https://www.facebook.com/events/178111952381696/>

anthropology entitled Red Delicious (available on my website and as e-book on the “In the Land of the Living” website “In the Land of the Living”).

Namely, the ontological basis of technology is the consumption of “resources” and slavery becomes the basis for these parasitic relationships where life, force, and effort get consumed in a one way energy flow. Basically, this establishes relationships of dependence where the enslaver depends on a “resource”, whether human animals, nonhumans, or machines, to labour for the benefit of the “owner” and where the “resource” is coerced to exchange her life and wild purpose of being for the right to live and work. My book, *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (Fernwood, 2013) delves in-depth into the ontological, epistemological, and methodological problems of domestication.

Because, as I argue in the book, the premise in civilisation is to consume, kill, and colonise, it yields an anthropology rooted in predation: both killing and rape. Namely, civilised knowledge constructs the human as the ultimate predator and the world existing in a “natural” hierarchical “food chain” to be controlled, reproduced, and consumed. Again, observation of the principles of life reveals that hierarchical systems of subsistence are parasitic and unsustainable since, in order to thrive, life needs diversity, mutuality, and symbiosis. By constructing an anthropology rooted in consumption of labour, flesh, and life, civilisation thus yields unviable cultures of socio-environmental relationships and hence we are witnessing the anthropogenic death of the world, which is literally being devoured by civilised human animals. This is an emergency situation and we do not have the luxury to reflect on whether we can “go back” or just scamper along trying to salvage our dying bones.

Hence, the real question we are facing is not whether the observed societies of undomesticated human and nonhuman people are utopic – it is not the wild who is utopic, for wilder-

ness has successfully thrived until now and I have lived in and with wilderness in both Russia and Sudan. The real problem is that civilisation has proven to be “utopic”. For, it never delivered on its promises: it has increased fertility of monoculturalism so that today domesticated nonhuman and human animals constitute 98% of vertebrae biomass on earth whereas, before the advent of agricultural civilisation in the Fertile Crescent ten thousand years ago, 99% of vertebrae biomass consisted of wild species. It created diseases and early mortality through desertification, war, hierarchical (lack of) access to food and water, etc. It has colonised the world and devastated it (I cite research and data in my book for these numbers). Even the ocean is turning into a desert and suffocating on plastic, acid, and civilised garbage.

Therefore, to hope that technologies will deliver us from this dying hell is analogous to – even though infinitely more painful and tragic than – the joke I often hear in Eastern Europe: you cure a hangover with vodka. We all know how vodka cures and in itself, like the other legal and illegal drugs, it is a symptom of the despair into which dependence on technological predation has plunged us. The need for inebriation is our inability or unwillingness to face our truth: we chose civilisation and hence we chose death. The real question now is: can we muster the strength to make a different choice? Anarcho-primitivism does not provide solutions, but its critiques show us where we have failed and point to a diversity of ways where we can go and how we can heal ourselves and our world.

Q: What did domestication take from us, in social terms, and consciousness? With consciousness i mean knowledge. Did domestication have a major impact on human development? Eg. It is clear that the development of non-human animals, which were domesticated, was stopped?

A: Domestication has most definitely taken away our intelligence and knowledge of how to live in the world. Education

and will engage a discussion on resistance to its narrative.

(7) Tuesday, 22nd October, 2013

New Moon Collective, Olympia, WA

Title:

Children at the Forefront of the War of Civilization over Colonization of Resources

Abstract:

Battling their own oppression and fighting against unjust systems for the wider public good, Anarchist and other activist parents often do not have the time to allot to rewinding their own parenting culture and thus relegate the task of child rearing to institutions or other civilized child-care. In this workshop, Layla will address the questions raised in her latest book, *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (Fernwood Publishing, 2013) pertaining to the real cost of parenting and child-rearing and the implications of the civilized predatory socio-environmental relationships on children, their culture, and thereby on the world.

(8) Wednesday, 23rd October, 2013

Black Coffee Coop, Seattle, WA

A talk on *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (Fernwood, 2013).

(9) Friday, 25th October, 2013

Red and Black Café, Portland, OR

A talk on *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (Fernwood, 2013).

(10) Tuesday, 29th October, 2013.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana

A talk on *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization*

Civilised science prioritises Cartesian thinking that divorces “reason” from “emotions” precisely because empathy with the exploited, the suffering, or the consumed will interfere with the project Civilisation.

In this conversation, Layla will discuss the underlying premises in scientific thinking about the world as a system of domestication of human and nonhuman resources for production, reproduction, consumption, and ultimately devastation.

(6) Sunday, 13th October, 2013

Purple Thistle, Vancouver, B.C.

Title:

The Insidious and Resilient Narratives of Domestication: Pitfalls to Watch for in Autonomous Learning Zones

Abstract:

What better weekend than ‘Thanksgiving’ to Join Layla AbdelRahim on her book tour for ‘Wild Children-Domesticated Dreams’, as she talks about colonization, domestication, and the challenge of not reproducing these mechanisms as we strive towards de-schooling.

Not only has the hierarchical project of domestication and civilization existed for the past ten thousand years, it has been expanding globally, engulfing more and more territories and bringing the world to a state nearing the brink of collapse of biodiversity and self-sustainability. This colonizing project has not been accepted passively. It has met strong ideological, epistemological, socio-economic, and physical resistance on both individual and social levels. Nonetheless, civilization has reached an epidemic level largely owing to its misconstruction of “knowledge” about human nature and the world. In her research, Layla AbdelRahim applies concepts from biology, anthropology, ethology, and sociology to examine the mechanisms by which socio-cultural narratives and material cultures reproduce themselves through domesticated bodies, minds, and desires. In this workshop, Layla will identify these mechanisms of perpetuating domesticated “unknowledge”

teaches us how to survive in civilisation: i.e. how to be dependent on the hierarchy of experts who take away our awareness of ourselves and the world. Instead of learning about the world through empathy and presence – “what does it feel like to be you?” – we are taught how to apply schemas and representations to understanding what those higher up in the food chain of “human resources” want us to “know”. Also, by learning how to apply these schemas and formulae to real life situations without understanding the complexity of what is at stake, we forfeit our chance at enjoying a more holistic comprehension of the world and also of adaptation to new occurrences.

In the wild, human and nonhuman children learn how to assess each situation and to understand each encounter correctly, because they know that lives and decisions are interconnected and they are not always predictable. If we are not prepared to be surprised we could perish. At the same, it is not always a fearsome experience. As Kropotkin observed in his *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, living in the wild is for the most part a good experience, predation being its less prominent aspect, since herbivores have historically outnumbered predators, who in turn eat less and sleep more. The aim of domestication, in contrast, is to ensure control and prediction of “assets” and “resources”. Hence, its programme is antithetical to evolution, diversity, improvisation, change, and surprise. The “resources” that such a system yields are dependent on the one who controls their lives and their food. Dependent “resources” are thus rendered incapable of thriving outside of that system of coercion and threat. They have to be dumbed down and hence are lied to. They are misled, victimised, threatened, and consumed. Nonetheless, as I argue in my book, human and nonhuman animals yearn wildness and it takes them much less to go feral than the decades it takes to domesticate them into oblivion.

Q: AP criticism of education is for most people not understandable, especially for the functioning of the “mod-

ern” world. What would you (on introduction) say to these people?

A: Even for myself, this link between education and domestication was not an obvious one. In fact, my book on education came as a side effect of my research on war, in medical anthropology in Sweden, and on the connections between the construction of “otherness”, the law, and the medical body in the courtroom in France – all of which led me to my doctoral dissertation on the epistemological, ontological, and anthropological understanding of narratives of civilisation and wilderness. The connection became clear when I was critiquing the foundation of civilised knowledge as based on classification and the separation of species. Namely, I realised that highlighting the differences in understanding the human as separate from the nonhuman or of life as different from nonlife constituted the epistemology that justified cruelty and that was at the root of sexism and racism. Comparing this socially constructed understanding of our humanity as predatory and alien to how noncivilised human and nonhuman people related to the world made me see how the project of education was critical for domestication, because it provided both the “knowledge” that justified oppression, colonialism of life systems by human predators, exploitation, and consumption as well as established the methodology to reproduce this culture of subsistence and socio-environmental economics.

In other words, if you want people to kill for you, you need to ensure that they do not know the experience and the truth of the one they kill. They need to be alienated from the one they kill and this alienation and predation has to be naturalised: you construct an anthropology of humans as superior to non-humans and “inferior” humans as nonsentient beings who do not feel pain, who exist for your consumption. Or, you construct an identity of the people you are sent to kill as different as enemy to your group, rationalise that they asked for it and instil the fear that they will kill you if you do not do it first,

based on “classification” of forms of life and nonlife. Hence, in monotheistic narratives, God creates groups of beings on different days and, in science, classification is the primary organising principle of knowledge. Knowing the self and the world by relating to individuals as members and representatives of an epistemological “class” fosters alienation from and ignorance of the real experiences of others and provides a system of oppression of whole groups of human and nonhuman beings. In other words, epistemological classification establishes economic classes, where some control the power and agency over the construction of “knowledge” while the others constitute “resources” to be domesticated and colonised by such knowledge and exploited as labour force and the source of pleasure and well-being for the “ruling” classes. Therefore, examining and critiquing how unknowledge about what is human or nonhuman is produced and reproduced through schooling and other cultural narratives is critical to overcoming gender, racial, and speciesist oppression.

(5) Tuesday, 15th October at 7pm. Camas Books, Victoria, B.C.:

Title:

What’s in a Class? On Reproduction of Gender, Species, and Ethnicity as Categories for Labour and Consumption

Abstract:

How do we know the world? How do we relate to the world and to our knowledge of it? Today, most people around the world believe that we cannot learn how to live in the world without having gone to school and received an “education”. However, what is this “education”? What is its content, its method, or its purpose?

Education is a systemic production, reproduction, and transmission of specific socio-economic constructs about humans, society, and the world. These constructs are then passed on as “knowledge”, which ensures the coexistence of epistemological classes as socio-economic classes in a hierarchical paradigm.

Abstract:

The Medieval European allegory of the Ship of Fools was more than a metaphor or a literary ruse to critique the Church and the state. In *Madness and Civilization*, Michel Foucault argues that this trope was also a real socio-political tactic used to cleanse the civilised space by isolating the “mad” or the “unreasonable” from “society”. For civilisation, “reason” has two constituents: *raison d’être* and sanity. The sane are here defined as those existing for the purpose of domestication in a “natural” food chain hierarchy. In this sense, “society” consists of those working for the “reason” of domestication and socio-economic hierarchy, exploitation, and consumption and those who cannot or refuse to abide by the domesticator’s definition of their reason for existence are either sent to sanatoriums, hospitals, or other correctional facilities to be cured or killed.

Drawing from the research conducted for her book, *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (2013), Layla AbdelRahim discusses schools and children’s culture as spaces of such isolation and “correction”: where the wild *raison d’être* to dream and to exist for one’s own, known or unbeknownst to self purpose is extinguished and where the child is taught to exist to serve as a human resource in the chain of exploitation of nonhuman resources.

(4) Saturday, 12th October at 7pm
Spartacus Books, Vancouver, B.C.

Title:

The Ingrained Premises of Injustice in the Unknowledge Sold as Education

Abstract:

In this discussion, Layla will draw on the research conducted for her book *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education*, in which she examines the underlying premises in the construction of knowledge that the institution of education produces and proliferates. The first premise is that knowledge of others must be organised and

etc. But epistemology is not sufficient by itself, you then need to create a situation of constant lack and endangerment in order for people to internalise fear and violence. This is where the methodology of civilised pedagogies plays a critical role: human children are torn from their parents at an early age, incarcerated in same-age groups within classroom walls, where they are constantly threatened with starvation by means of low grades and future unemployment if they do not learn the abstract “knowledge” and civilised grammar of hierarchy and obedience. This pedagogy mirrors the methods used on nonhuman animal slaves: a horse is fed only when it has yielded more profit to the domesticator than what was spent on sustaining her and if she refused to work, she is killed. In this sense, the famous Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov has not discovered anything new when he articulated his theory of the training of dogs. In my book on education, I explore other pedagogies of “unschooled” children and recount my observations of how they learn.

Q: What do you think about the traditional or red anarchists? Especially, when we speak about their neutral attitude towards technology, domestication and often also towards colonialism. (actually their attitude towards AP and its ideas is the same as the attitude of major society)

First, the term “traditional” is highly problematic, because it establishes a bias towards a specific perspective as the “majority” “norm” and thus normalises that perspective which gives it power while marginalising or establishing as “deviant” or “abnormal” other perspectives thereby disempowering their adherers. The question that such a term raises is: traditional according to whom? Noncivilised, nontechnological, acapitalist societies based on mutual aid and symbiotic socio-economic cultures of subsistence have been the norm throughout the history of the world and until the present. Uncontacted human tribes continue to exist and resist civilisation around the world to this day. So do wild nonhumans. Even those

surrounded by civilisation do not give up the wilderness of their landbase easily, hence the resistance to the construction of Monte Belo dam by the Xingu indigenous peoples of Brazil or the Mi'kmaq resistance to shale gas drilling in Canada are only some of the examples of contemporary resistance to civilised violence. In fact, domestication and civilisation – along with their systems of governance – have been resisted consistently ever since agricultural sedentary cultures began colonising the gatherer and nomadic nonhuman and human animals. In other words, resistance to civilisation in a variety of forms has been the traditional practice around the world for more than ten thousand years while “red anarchism” has existed only sporadically in the European historical enclaves and other Western nation states for only a few centuries.

Second, the concept of anarchism itself is contextual. Wild societies, whose cultures of subsistence are based on symbiotic socio-environmental relationships, cannot be defined as “anarchist”, because anarchism is resistance to systems of governmentality in hierarchical cultures and their methods of coercion, exploitation, and consumption that the governing systems impose. In other words, anarchism is important for understanding the problems of governance, for articulating the critiques of domestication, and for tactical purposes of resistance and overcoming a subsistence system based on suffering, desertification, and death. These critiques arise in specific circumstances and are therefore contextual and hence often limited and biased. For instance, a wealthy white male writing a theory of anarchism and designing anarchist praxis in a 19th or 20th century white supremacist society ultimately depends on the “imperialist”, racist, sexist, and speciesist “privileges” which shelter him from experiencing the reality of human or nonhuman “prey”. That is why, even if there may be great value to his analysis, nonetheless, his understanding and recommendations would be biased and limited, because he would not always be cognizant of what it is like to be the prey on a

Narrative of Domestication

Abstract:

Obligatory schooling has become the global narrative that frames our understanding of how children must learn. Narratives become reality when people act according to the plot that drives these narratives. Hence, obligatory schooling, where children are taught through literacy how to know and live in the world, has become the reality for most human children on earth. Furthermore, even if the specific details of what, for instance, is taught in French schools might differ from what might be taught in Kenya, there is a unifying experience of submitting children to “discipline” and hierarchical structure of obedience through literacy from an early age. This literacy is mostly linked with today’s major civilisations: European, Arab, and Chinese, the core of whose syllabus aims to domesticate human resources and instill in them a place in the hierarchy of the “food chain”. In this respect, the seemingly personal choice of parents or a community to whether send their children to school or choose to educate them at home or in the community, in both cases, constitutes a political choice: one to conform to the socio-economic and political system based on consumption and exploitation or to resist this paradigm. In this talk, Layla will draw on her discussion of “unschooling” and “schooling” in her new book *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (Fernwood Publishing 2013) to address how successful resistance has to entail a critique of the underlying speciesist, racist, and misogynist mandate of the domesticating narrative of civilisation and the disciplining methods of the civilised institution.

(3) Friday, 18th October at 3pm.

Department of Geography, University of Victoria, B.C.

Title:

The Ship of Fools as a Place of Spectacle, Healing, and Education where the Wild are Sent to Die

Surrey, B.C.

Watch video here:

<http://youtu.be/uVQujVAN6zM>.

Title:

Crime and Reward from an Anarcho-primitivist Perspective

Abstract:

George Zimmerman's acquittal in the shooting death of Black teenager, Trayvon Martin, this summer came as a surprise to many mostly because the civilised believe words and focus on language rather than on praxis and consequences. Namely, civilised people see the judicial system with its verbose process of trial as a system of justice and in the eyes of those involved in Zimmerman's trial, there was "no evidence beyond reasonable doubt" that Zimmerman acted outside the confines of the American law. The question thus was not whether killing someone was wrong, the problem that was to be resolved in this system of justice was whether the killer had the right to kill.

In this lecture, Layla AbdelRahim discusses the civilized premises that construct the human animal as predatory and thus centers murder in anthropology itself and reinforces the predatory narrative. Furthermore, this predation is structured by the classificatory system of civilized epistemology that categorizes groups of living and nonliving beings, whether human or not, as "resources" and "consumers" thereby excluding whole groups and immense suffering from the public discourse on justice. And as discussed in her book, *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education*, this predatory narrative is reinforced by both the medical sector and the system of education.

(2) Tuesday, 16th

In Duncan, B.C.:

<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/39913923>

Title:

Schooling as a Political Choice to Conform to the Colonising

daily, minute by minute basis, because epistemologically and experientially he knows the world through a predatory lens. Often then, the very science on which these men base their critiques stems from this naturalised predatory perspective from which they benefit and their epistemology works to confirm to them the "natural" aspect of predation thus veiling from them the ways in which their own existence, subsistence, and resistance depend on the victimisation of whole groups of persons designated as "prey" in their socio-economic niche.

Excellent illustration of such myopia in critique of civilisation today would be the work of Jared Diamond that continues to build on the assumption that the noncivilised and undomesticated world is based on violence and predation. In leftist anarchism this predatory perspective can be traced in such conclusions as drawn by contemporary theorists such as David Graeber. For instance, in June 2009, Graeber and I had a public discussion in the Anarchist Anthropology group on the Open Anthropology Cooperative in which he sweepingly accused anarcho-primitivists of living in their mothers' basements and telling me that he knew what the Bangladeshi farmers wanted: to grow food. First, using "mothers' basements" as an insult to dismiss a theory relies on patriarchal exploitation and degradation of women. This means, that in Graeber's eyes "masculine" anarchists who use the predatory system to advance themselves in the world without relying on "mothers" – or the feminine class that is constructed to breed and reproduce human resources – are the etalon of success; while the feminine class is belittled and kept in the background of economic success – even can be seen as "failure" in this usage. Second, this requires the ability to tune out of the arguments of one's interlocutor, in this instance, Graeber is deaf to the actual arguments of anarcho-primitivists and sweeps them under the rug because he associates them with the "loser" class – the women, the mothers. Finally, to keep the patriarchal system of (re)production of resources in tact the white male dominant

class needs “Bangladeshi” and other farmers and workers to remain in their niches and to keep wanting to grow the food and (re)produce resources and technologies for the “intellectuals” on the front-lines of patriarchy. “How do you know that the Bangladeshi farmers do not want to be anarchist anthropologists instead?” I asked Graeber. But Graeber was offended by my response, because, as he explained to me later for some reason he did not expect “this” from me: I was, apparently, expected to agree with his expertise and not voice a disagreement with the leftist intellectual rationalisation of the *raison d’être* of Bangladeshi and other farmers, Malaysian workers in car industry, Chinese computer factory workers, et al and ad infinitum.

This explains why there is a racial and gender hierarchy in what most white people consider to be “anarchist theory”. For, it is usually a small minority, namely, white men, most often from the ruling class, who have the infrastructure and the social, symbolic, and material capital that allow them to think and produce as well as to access the public sphere as a dominant voice. White women and lower white classes have to struggle much more than their white male counterparts to be allowed into this sphere of influence and social power. The perspectives of people of colour and of nonhuman wilderness are ousted from the dominant “public” sphere. People of colour are mostly silenced in publishing and media outlets unless they respond to the needs of white supremacy or become revolutionaries in countries that have colonial dependence on the “European” (Western or Northern) metropolis and its parasitic relationship to the rest of the world. In this respect, even the “revolutionary” people of colour are used by the Western “radicals”, particularly the leftist anarchists, as props for their own agenda that aims at establishing the white leftists in the vanguard of politics without threatening their racialised and gendered privileges, which include access to “technologies”, i.e. to the living and nonliving slaves and labour. Because of this intrinsic de-

to define ourselves in terms of our “consumption” and “preferences”, which leaves the debate in the realm of predation, or whether we should revise our anthropology in terms of our environmental role as symbiotic frugivore gatherers along with other primates. Hence, even though in my own personal food choice, I have decided at the age of four not to consume the flesh of others, and it is easier to clarify in North America my food limitations in terms of veganism, I still articulate my critique in terms of the epistemological construction of humanity as evolutionary “successful” because of their predatory anthropology. Again, I discuss this more in-depth in my book on education and I am dedicating a big part in my current book project that aims at critiquing the civilised evolutionary theory. Finally, I address this point in my Question and Answer period during my October 8th lecture at the Department of Criminology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University B.C., which can be accessed here: <http://youtu.be/uVQujVAN6zM>.

Layla additionally send **screenshot discussions with David Graeber**: <http://i.imgur.com/oTJOqBq.png>.

This interview you can also download and print it, and distribute it outside the virtual space. See pdf.

On October 2013 book tour:

Interviews:

- 1) On Animal Voices, Vancouver by Alissa: <http://animalvoices.org/2013/10/layla-abdelrahim-tribute-to-turkeys/>
- 2) On Gorilla Radio, CFUV (University of Victoria) by Chris Cook: <https://soundcloud.com/cfuv/gorilla-radio-layla-abdelrahim>
- 3) On Doers, Makers, Thinkers CFUV (University of Victoria) by Julian: <https://soundcloud.com/cfuv/doers-makers-thinkers-layla>

Talks:

- (1) Tuesday, 8th October, 2013, 5:30 pm.
Department of Criminology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University,

capacity to empathise so completely with a character he was depicting that he could know how an old horse suffers or an ostracised by patriarchal society woman would find it impossible to go on living. Writing the story of “An Old Horse” or Anna Karenina with honesty, Tolstoy could not find any justification for civilisation, technological society, and thereby for the culture of slavery. This knowledge had dire implications for his life, actions, and relationships. Such people have existed throughout the history of civilisation. However, for real change to come, we need more people from the “privileged” classes to refuse their privileges and join the ranks of the humans and nonhumans on whom they prey. They need to understand what it is like to be forced to exist as the machine, as the prostheses of a willful domesticator, the ultimate predator – that foolish ape who has brought the world to the brink of extinction. Because, as Philip Dick tells us in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, when you realise that you may be holding the last tiny spider on your palm and you weep for it with your whole body and soul, it is not the anthropocentric solidarity of “red anarchism” that will bring that spider back to life, but a heroic act of reaching out across the borders of speciesism and diving beyond the frontiers of the ontological machine – that ultimate slave – that we can regain the paradise lost, which is wilderness and which is life.

Q: On your website i read a discussion, from which i have concluded that you’re a vegan? Is it true? If you are a vegan, what do you consider the benefits of veganism? Do you know, a lot of people would ask how is AP related to veganism; people have to go back to hunting.

A: The problem with critiquing predation in terms of veganism is that such a critique then accentuates the personal preferences in consumption rather than highlighting the larger ramifications of how we construct our anthropology. It is this concern that my opening statement in the “Mythical Predator” discussion articulates: namely, whether we should continue

pendence on slave labour, these “anarchists” rely on the same schemas in their encounters with human and nonhuman animals and their use of technology and media. However, since most people around the world (more than 70% of whom are people of colour) constitute the resources of labour for white supremacy, then most of non-white perspectives tend to be critical of the “Western” socio-economic model that continues to exploit them and hence a critique of technology is more present in those discourses. However, these perspectives are kept outside the realm of influence by keeping the media and the publishing industry focusing on the production of “white” anthropocentric knowledge and dismissing non-white perspectives as a priori irrelevant, insignificant, marginal, and trivial.

I have plenty of encounters with radical, anarchist, and mainstream publishing and media that confirm this. Here is one example to illustrate how it works: at the 2007 Anarchist Bookfair in Montreal, I approached Autonomedia press based in New York. When I explained to the co-partner of the press my work and offered that should their publishing press be interested in taking a look at my manuscript, I would be happy to send it to her, she told me condescendingly that I should first inform myself about their literature. “We publish anarchist books. You should first get acquainted with what we do. We do not publish Mexican cookbooks” she informed me.

Autonomedia has published several white men who had taken Islamic names, such as Peter Lamborn Wilson known as Hakim Bey and Michael Muhammad Knight, because this symbolic action – of taking an Arabic name by a white male – appears to be radical. However, when meeting a brown woman face to face the publishers fail to understand what I was explaining about my work. In the case of Autonomedia, the publisher applied the schema of a brown woman being associated with the lower status occupation of “cook” and instinctually dismissed me as incapable of producing a critique worthy of her publishing house’s attention. This association

with Mexican cuisine is not only sexist however; it is also racist, because in my case, even if my last name is Arabic, the brown skin and the petite stature allowed her to not bother with figuring out the “correct” stereotype but to generalise my occupation as trivial regardless of geographical accuracy. We see that this white woman operates with the same schema with which David Graeber was operating in the example above, a formula used to belittle and dismiss as “irrelevant” the kitchen that feeds the men – especially the white men – and the white supremacist paradigm, regardless of whether these individuals involved are radical or mainstream. The production of theory and the expectation of who “knows” and who is “trustworthy” is thus a social capital that works as investment for the “traditional” voices in the hierarchy and thereby excludes the majority of the perspectives of those who actually feed the world; after all, most humans do not come from the ruling class, they are rather “ruled” and their lives in the kitchen or the field consumed. Most of them, if given the option would not want to keep the world as status quo and to keep their “professions” as is.

Since “social anarchists” or “red anarchists” find themselves higher up the food chain, it is thus easy for them to remain blind to the fact that the white supremacist system works for their benefit and that technology is important for them to keep their predatory “privileges” intact as technology allows them to live off of others, mostly nonhuman people and people of colour: the eternal question of who does the mining, the drilling, the farming, the sewing, the cooking, the cleaning, the production of technologies, energy, ad infinitum.

Furthermore, this hierarchy in itself works as a successful mechanism of oppression that is also at work in the so called “post-colonial” spaces, where the people of colour who are in positions of power over “former” colonies know that their own predatory place in the food-chain is secured if they keep supplying the white supremacist economic model. In this

sense, the food-chain hierarchy also colludes in keeping the anarchist voices of non-white and nonhuman perspectives silenced and marginalised including in their own “post” colonial lands. Moreover, even for Europeans, understanding anarchist thought and traditions depends on the region, era, and the highlighted struggles articulated by those who are “leading” the resistance, which is not always representative of how the people may view their struggles. The terms “Bolshevik” and “Menshevik” during the Russian revolution are revealing: the word Bolshevik meant majority voices in the Second Party Congress split from the Mensheviks (meaning the minority) in 1903, but in fact this was the minority opinions in the larger revolutionary scale where anarchists and other factions prevailed. So, engaging with any ideas requires us to be sensitive to the individual work and the dialogue it provokes in a wild, non-traditional engagement with interpretation, understanding, and action. Again, in my book on education, I discuss in-depth how we know, understand, and interact from an anarchist perspective.

By virtue of my complex background, variegated experiences in a spectrum of socio-economic classes, and exposure to a wide range of historical narratives, revolutions, post-colonial struggles as well as having lived on five continents I am extremely sensitive to the perspectives that direct our understanding and praxis. In my own theoretical explorations, I am willing to dialogue with a wide spectrum of thinkers and scientists. I hence do not shy from citing white male thinkers such as Errico Malatesta, Petr Kropotkin, or Karl Marx, among others. But I make sure that I also include indigenous, ELF, ALF, or writers, thinkers, and revolutionaries from the whole world and listen to the nonverbal experience of nonhuman people.

However, my background is not a prerequisite for the possibility of attaining enlightenment in the experience of others. Leo Tolstoy was exemplary in this sense, because he had the