# “A Web of Relations & Tensions”

**— interview with Return Fire**

Return Fire, No Path

summer 2022

# Contents

*These questions were completed, as requested, for the first release of No Path[1] – a project aiming to make more links between the 'anti-civilisation' and 'anti-speciesist' strands in the anarchist world. The invitation to participate was very welcome, and it seemed a good opportunity to offer critical engagement with these tendencies, as well as talk about the upcoming Return Fire book which No Path had taken interest in. However, when the 'zine went to print, No Path wrote to say that the fifth question and answer (the one relating to the focus of their project) had been cut, citing lack of space. Here is the unabridged version of the interview. For copies of No Path #1 (which will otherwise be offline only), email them at nopath[at]riseup.net*

## (1) A central topic in your upcoming book is a critical engagement with individualism, a term which you often see getting misinterpreted. How do you approach anarchist individualism? Do you think it's worth describing ourselves as individualists, or has this become too misleading?

First off thanks a lot for offering the space here, and good luck with the project. Apologies that this interview is more rushed than it should be. Heartfelt greetings and strength also to those currently reading, wherever they are, whatever they're dealing with and whatever liberatory projects they are realising, or which they sense inside themselves. Appreciation and respects are also to be paid to those who have gone before us, in whose footsteps we find the path, and in whose visions our own disparate and insurrectional imaginations refract. To the land that feeds and amazes us, that teaches us and gives us meaning within a web of relations and tensions. To anarchy, anarchism and anarchists as strands in that web, chords in that orchestra.

It's true that the genesis of the yet-to-be-released book from *Return Fire* (*Instigations,* which was signed off in early 2020 but is still sporadically being edited down for length before going out for feedback pre-publication) was a questioning of the kind of individualism which accompanied the birth of the 'zine and surrounded it at the time. (All energy being directed to this process – considering the paltry amount of time available to dedicate to *Return Fire* – means that the most recent volumes of the 'zine have had very little editorial content, even compared to normal.) As late as the very earliest draft of what became the book (a 2017 entry to our 'glossary' series – in this case re-qualifying the tagline 'Individual Will' which featured on the *Return Fire* masthead from volumes 1–5 – but which was destroyed before it could be released), this was still the main focus.

However it quickly began to feel necessary to take a few steps back to be able to assess the place some of these questions were even being asked from. What were the understandings of a self, body, psyche and all its needs, desires and contradictions? What are its boundaries and pores, and with what more-than-entirely-human parts does it dance and make kinship? What is its world, what does its world want, how does its world speak? What is the historical moment these questions are being asked in, and what lives in the past should we better understand when absorbing their voices? What is the context of the kinds of anarchism that this project has been formulating or synthesising; what baggage comes with that, and what other forms of anarchism are (or were) de-emphasised?

[1] See 'No Path: call for submissions for a new publishing project' (web, 2022)

What is the nature of the agency we have (and, looking back of the events and cycle of struggles of roughly 2010–2020, have recently had), and where does that agency even come from? What have we been, and – across a number of different registers – what are we becoming? What ways can these questions serve us when put in the context of an era of increasingly chaotic crises of capitalism[2] and its colonial world-system,[3] accelerating ecological turmoil, so-called resistance movements that don't know how to take the offensive[4] or even to take care of each other[5] (or in the worst cases are largely stage-managed dissent), resurgent imperialisms[6] and ethno-nationalisms,[7] and the further entrenchment of a philosophical-technological trajectory[8] that is more alarming by the day? In other words; what does this mean for our actual survival and ability to thrive, and how to make those possibilities the centre of our activity?

Quickly it became a much less atomised and abstract issue, and simultaneously one about much more than simply how to navigate issues in social circles or with regards to a ridiculously ephemeral and hyperbolic notion of 'society' that *Return Fire* has slowly been moving away from;[9] it became one focused on the possibility and necessity of recognising revolt as an ecology,[10] on a more generative treatment of the social/anti-social tension,[11] and on an attempted mutiny against the allegiances of whiteness and the Western project[12] even in what may be their twilight. True to the latter intention, and as opposed to previous *Return Fire* editorial works (or even this interview), the book is written with a poetic, associative and situated voice, rejecting the objectivity-delusion[13] of (capital-S) Science and its derivatives in the academy, open to its own inherent limits but also giving free reign to the imaginations, story-lines, landbases and ancestry which – for better and for worse – make it what it is, in defiance of the rationalist notion of a rootless 'no-place' one could begin such an inquiry from.

As for the place that anarchist-individualism gets in all this, and the ties that link it to everything above, you can probably start to imagine some of the implications; but for now let's just say that yes, the tradition itself has been misinterpreted and maligned by some, and a concern of the book is to address that while also attending to the limitations which make it an unappealing label to continue with. However, rather than out of hand rejecting such threads (or indeed their loudest critics!), the point would be more to see what roles and meanings such positions – or, better, processes – have within social contexts; the interest of *Return Fire* has never been

[2] See 'Diagnostic of the Future; Between the Crisis of Democracy and the Crisis of Capitalism: A Forecast', by Peter Gelderloos (zine & web, 2018)

[3] See 'Anarchy in World Systems: A review of Giovanni Arrighi's The Long 20th Century', by Alex Gorrion (anthology 'The Totality is Incomplete', 2018, & web)

[4] See 'After Lockdown, Let's Look at the Situation We're Finding Around Us', anonymous (web, 2021)

[5] See 'Horrible Creatures', by Sever (web, 2019)

[6] See 'A Very Long Winter', by Liasons (anthology 'In the Name of the People', 2018, & web, 2022)

[7] See ' On the Frontier of Whiteness? Expropriation, War, and Social Reproduction in Ukraine', by Olena Lyubchenko (web, 2022)

[8] See 'Caught in the Net: Notes from an Era of Cybernetic Delirium', by Return Fire (magazine supplement, 2016, & web)

[9] See 'The Veil Drops: Anti-Extremism or Counter-Insurgency?', by some anti-authoritarian barbarians already inside the walls (Return Fire #3, 2015–2016)

[10] See '23 Theses Concerning Revolt', by Distri Josep Gardenyes (zine, 2011 [Spanish], & web [English], 2020)

[11] See 'Social War, Antisocial Tension: A Continuation of 23 Theses Regarding Revolt', by Distri Josep Gardenyes (zine, 2011 [Spanish], & web [English], 2016)

[12] See 'The Witch's Child', anonymous (web, 2011)

[13] See 'Science', by Alex Gorrion (anthology 'The Totality is Incomplete', 2018, & web)

to determine correct lines or mobilise for the exclusion of conceptions that differ from our own but could conceivably compliment or generatively-complicate them. So expect claws to come out when needed, but the overall aim is to try to draw out themes from what the broadest possible 'we' (intentional liberatory movements, scattered rebel elements, and land-loving cultures raising a fist against the State and capitalist life-ways) are already doing, and meditations on how to weave those together most artfully.

On that note, it's worth saying that the book would not be anything it is – and hopefully will be – without the direct participation of correspondents and other comrades across the world. And while it seems impossible and undesirable to precisely define who gets to claim 'authentic' membership of many peoples after their attempted genocide by colonial powers (let alone how many of those members would agree on how or whether to share their ancestral living knowledge), the book attempts to integrate aspects of Aymara, Māori, Diné, Guaraní, Gaelic, Mapuche, Sámi, Nishnaabeg, and Yorùbá traditions that have been suggested by carriers of those cultures in their dialogues with (other) anarchists and radicals who, for their part, are trying to destroy the Westernisation they were born into. Basically, getting into the grittiness of the challenge hinted at previously[14] in *Return Fire* to proliferate 'anarchisms that indigenise' when that's even possible, and to uplift potent indigenous anarchisms[15] as they exist. In short, recovering our roots[16] in the land we walk, or sinking them anew; importantly, with the consent (and possibly the accompaniment) of those indigenous to it if we are not.

It hasn't been easy trying to walk a line between twin dangers of Eurocentricism (including that absorbed from certain anarchist legacies) and of exoticism or unwanted appropriation – though the idea was also to problematise assertions that desired characteristics only adhere to an Other and don't have submerged histories even in these lands within reach – and no doubt the text will have strayed unwittingly at times; so feedback and critique will be necessary to carry onwards the thrust it was written to add to. For those who directly offered proof-reading and comment-sharing, your patience has been greatly appreciated!

So, to return to that final line of your first question: individualist would be a misleading label and yet so too would be collectivist. With that rich paradox hinted at, let's step back and fill in the pregnant space with the book itself; hopefully before too much longer.

## (2) Do you think it's important to keep up to date with the news and other digital media? Do we strengthen the structures we dislike by concerning ourselves with happenings we can't see and touch?

Possibly the problem isn't that we can't see or touch the events going on (after all, with the international networks we anarchists often have, the ripples they send out often touch us indirectly), but that anarchists are not finding ways to create real-life situations to collectively discuss and decide how those events affect them or how to respond. It would in some limited ways

[14] See 'Colonisation', by Return Fire (magazine supplement, 2015–2016, & web)

[15] See 'Unknowable: Against an Indigenous Anarchist Theory', by Klee Benally (anthology 'Black Seed: Not on Any Map', 2021, & web)

[16] See 'Locating An Indigenous Anarchism', by Aragorn! (magazine article, 2005, & web, 2009)

be nice to imagine that anarchists could find bubbles to live in from whence to ignore the 'outside' world – some but not all of the conversations around 'desertion' in the anarchist anti-civilisation space revolve around this hypothesis; perhaps not coincidentally, they're usually held in settler states where there are still large areas that are colonised and, post-genocide, de-populated, but not yet totally industrialised – but for the vast majority this 'privilege' will never exist and is probably more of a handicap than an ideal. The world will come to your place,[17] and woe to you if you didn't even know about whatever social struggles might have slowed that advance. That said, *Return Fire* is often 6 months or more out of date on pretty much all news (though immediately before publication each time an effort is made to get up to speed on developments in anarchy land at least); which is why, despite having grown out of the counter-information network of reposts and translations and so often not hosting original content – though sometimes containing content not previously available in English – it has always had the aim of being more of a yearbook than a news-source.

Mostly this is due to lack of time, not lack of interest. It's regrettable that, despite many people's kind words about *Caught in the Net* that was released with vol.4 and its translation into various languages, it has not seemed to generate discussion on the actual proposals included towards the end for how to break the isolation of the screen while still finding ways to bring the news they convey into our circles in a way that is actually conducive to conversation, reflection and action. Because too often people are just letting their newsfeed wash over them as they sit alone on the bus or on the computer, perhaps chipping in a hot-take, having a beer and going to bed and forgetting it until the next evening. The atomising effects of this technological architecture militate against us finding ways to actually make the information our own; of course there is the converse risk of people obsessing over events happening afar to the exclusion of working out what can be done in their daily surroundings, but again probably not talking to anyone in their daily surrounding about their ideas and desires is more often the problem than the reading of stuff from outside of that location in-and-of-itself. To give one example, hearing news about recent events[18] in the inspirational struggle[19] against the Coastal Gas Link pipeline on unceded lands (part of the wave of anti-infrastructure struggles, often indigenous-led, now recognised to have majorly affected energy extraction across Turtle Island and the other continents it was due to supply) could end up being pacifying sweeties to suck on as we lick our wounds from the day; or they could be what resolve in us the will to screen a film about that struggle with our friends, or attack some similar project in our area. Other times, that might not feel possible: but sucking on it might help keep those dreams alive until it is.

Not least, a critical part of overcoming the colonial arrogance and disconnection of populations in the Global North (including anarchists) from the Global South will be strengthening and deepening ties of solidarity and communication across that divide, and learning how forms of knowledge can flow in both directions – as already happens with comrades compelled to migrate, or has potential to – but especially thinking through how to break certain patterns of dependency (of the South upon the North) that have been intentionally built into capitalist globalisation. In the situation of actually being able to leverage social upheavals to move in directions that explicitly look to make those ruptures a departure from colonial relations and solidaristic on

[17] See 'A Handful of Objections: A Response to a Proposal for Desertion', by kidYELLOW (magazine article, 2018, & web, 2022)

[18] See 'CGL Pipeline work site attacked', by Darren Handschuh (web, 2022)

[19] See 'Nighttime Visit at the Home of an RBC Executive', anonymous (web, 2022)

the appropriate level, these bridges are a must: speculations about what forms this could take[20] are a rich direction with which to supplement and situate our relationship to our own location. And while personal relationships[21] are without doubt the best approach so as to avoid building partnerships with so-called allies who turn out to be anything but (unfortunately also an experience of certain previous experiments in internationalism), whether they are founded there or just extended there, digital tools will probably be a prominent part of getting us to that point.

This isn't to understate the skepticism also contained in *Caught in the Net* and in *Instigations* towards the way these technologies have forced themselves to the forefront of what it means to be an anarchist and engage in struggle today; but the fact of the matter is that right now the people who don't stay up to date with the news are still glued to something else on their device anyway, and if they're not it's because of survival concerns that we're struggling to collectivise. Addressing that latter point is without a doubt more important than being up-to-date with the news, but the reality often is that we are isolated and probably need the boost from hearing from other places, to be able to keep going, just to address the logistics of staying afloat. Let's just hope everyone is still capable of turning away from those screens when near-life experiences finally beckon for more than just instants. Even in moments like those created by recent saboteurs across the Channel,[22] perhaps imagination can once again find its wings.

## (3) Some anti-civ zines have made the decision not to appear online, presumably because they oppose mass society and digital communication. Given that this isn't the decision you made, do you want to explain why?

Yes, the phenomenon you describe is a good way of at least minimally resisting the all-consuming cybernetic Behemoth that swallows everything, contains everything and yet contains nothing, takes you everywhere and yet nowhere. But *Return Fire's* budget is so low that not many copies are often directly printed out of it; the vast majority are printed and distributed by autonomous crews across the continents, without coordination or usually even communication: people just get the PDF online and run with it. So that's just the way this particular tool works. If things were different, maybe *Return Fire* would be offline only; maybe this will be a part of its future even. But as long as some other comrades are doing those kind of projects, maybe it's nice to keep another reference point there for people who aren't travelling in those same circles to be able to pick it up too (though unlucky for them if they can't print it out because it's horrible to read on the screen; at least recent chapters have been an improvement on that front).

[20] See 'Strategies For Ecological Revolution From Below with Peter Gelderloos' (The Final Straw Radio zine, broadcast & podcast, 2022)

[21] See 'Building International Solidarity: Human Relations for Global Struggle', by Eepa (web, 2021)

[22] See 'And One Beautiful Night, Internet was Cut in a Good Part of the Country…', anonymous (web, 2022)

## (4) Both of our projects attempt to deepen the discussion on animism. Of course taking everything as alive can seem a bit crazy even to the most open-minded of Westerners… How do you make use of animism? And how do you think anarchists who grew up in the West might like to approach it?

Well, how anarchists who grew up in the West already *like* to approach animism is true to the origins of the term; and so we need to start with some clarifications of what animism in this discussion is and isn't.

The first thing to mention is anthropology. A racist dickhead that won't be graced here with his name coined the term 'animism' in the late 19th Century; he meant by it a stupid, childish superstition by misguided 'tribal peoples' that everything was alive, whereas he (safe in his study making notes) 'knew' that it wasn't. The context for this is the Victorian obsession with categorising everything and putting it in its place; hey presto, 'animism' is the box to put cultural practices or knowledge to do with the agency, personhood or sacredness of things Science[23] has decided are actually inanimate. In the late 20th Century interested parties with pretensions to even higher enlightenment (despite working in the same universities run by the same elites, and reproducing the same institutions and often the same scientific ideologies) wanted to distance themselves from this particular racist – although not from the university itself – and started talking about New Animism (begging the question, new to whom?), a conversation that at least minimally tends to accept the possibility of these non-rationalist experiences as valid. Basically, animism is a place where wildly different tendencies (that exist across a whole range of cultures, religions, philosophies etc.) get lumped together for the single reason that they violate the rationalist dogma of an inanimate universe.

Therefore, there is no one thing called animism. The term is often used – not in your question, to be clear – as if there was, and that has often been the approach of interested anarchists (and to a larger extent, neo-pagans, Instagram witches, etc.): lumping together a whole range of different practices and traditions to replicate at will. (Of course other kinds of anarchist approach 'animism' the same as they approach anything that violates the rationalist dogmas they've inherited from imperial science[24] and capitalism itself; they approach it to dismiss it.)

But the potent thing about treating the world as if it is always in a state of movement, of becoming, of response, of personhood, is that you don't actually know what is going to happen: a particular stone could suddenly have found its way into your hand while walking the beach, by what agency? A storm might break just at the moment something tremendously tense reaches a climax. A card you are choosing at random from a deck might hold the exact mirror of your emotional state. That plant you've been visiting, sitting with and steeping leaves from to make tea might act through you, open you up, know you. A forest might deny you entry. You might write a poem and realise as you finish that not one line came from you. You might carry a blessed bead carved from yew to protect you on a dangerous journey. A river might overturn the boat of the invader, while letting you escape to the far bank, or have done so for your ancestors, or might itself be an ancestor; a dream might tell you where to find a certain bird; the bird might

[23] See 'Science Revisited', by Alex Gorrion (anthology 'The Totality is Incomplete', 2018, & web)

[24] See 'A Green Anarchist Critique Of Science', by Autumn Leaves Cascade (web)

tell you why it is you can't stop thinking about your late grandmother today; the bird might be your grandmother. Then again, in any given moment and in any of the above cases, they might not.

Animism in this sense (animism,[25] not Animism) is not systematisable; it is not an explanatory framework for how the world works, like theories such as pan-psychism. Thus, it's more about what you practice and experience than what you believe. That's a point in its favour. But to call it what it is, the way people like us (you, *Return Fire*, many anarchists) can engage with animism in this sense – apart from some personal and modest practices too personal to be exposed to the light in this interview – is more by reading fucking anthropology about more sane societies and then noting its absence in our culture at large, a wondering (and wandering) about the things that scientific worldviews leave out or get wrong, and not a cultural practice that has survived generations of colonisation and uprooting from our stateless past.

Except when it is. Actually, although they are not on their own enough shreds to sew the quilt we ache for, people repeatedly fail to be the rationalist Western subject that we have been trained for so long to be, and these odd little patches end up in all kinds of garments. From the famous recuperations that the Catholic Church had to make during its attempts to co-opt so-called 'pagan' peoples by synchronising elements with them (giving us worship of the saints as a memory of ancestor veneration, chapels built on shrines at holy wells, etc.) to the way we still talk to plants we grow or cars we drive or people we have lost – often without realising it. Under layers of colonial fantasy, inappropriate appropriation and sheer making it up as you go along, Western magical traditions (almost completely severed by Inquisitions, witch-hunting and synchronism, but more or less re-invented in the last couple of hundred years to the degree that by now we can just about talk of the emergence of traditions again) also hold some relevant parts out that are within grasp if you're lucky enough to have access to practitioners, despite their many flaws.

But re-weaving a cultural practice around the aliveness, the sacredness, the personhood of the inhabitants of this living world (which we never know how to separate when it is acting upon us or we upon it; hence, *Instigations,* where do they come from, what agency is ours?); that is a challenge we can only work out in each place, in each lineage: and as a social rather than individual process, to give it structure, regularity, validation. (The forthcoming book will offer some thoughts on the place for cyclical celebrations to try to kindle something of this spirit, as small as it is.) If anarchists were trying to live with and as part of their hosting landbase, their reflections or experiences might be much more relevant than a thousand articles based on articles based on studies 'deepening the discussion'; but it's necessary to learn different languages to be able to hear these lessons, languages they don't teach at school, languages like patience. Tongues that are not (just) human.

In general separating spirituality from culture is a fool's errand (again, consider the pointlessness and harmfulness of appropriating random elements willy-nilly), yet when we do find shards in whatever remnants of our own ancestral lines we can unearth – unless we're specifically invited to be guests in someone else's by that community – piecing them together with what teachings are coming from the land today is not necessarily a pointless venture. After all, it's what many indigenous-descended are also doing, when colonisation has eaten so much up

[25] See 'Anarchist Spirituality Presentation From the 2015 East Bay Anarchist Bookfair', anonymous (audio, 2015, & web, 2016)

and left so little (though with us in the hyper-industrialised parts of the Global North, least of all remains). So while it would be disingenuous to describe *Return Fire* as an animist project or something, you could say that there's an animist influence in lines of approach, an animist openness. But it rarely finds a real-world expression as yet.

Maybe anarchists interested in these topics need to embarrass ourselves (there's little we can do to avoid that, but it's no reason but to try), though perhaps also to be quiet and modest about it. Some comrades[26] we respect a lot advise against[27] talking too much or too openly about our forays into this so-called 'spiritual' stuff, the baby-steps we Westernised and rootless anarchists are taking. Perhaps *Instigations* leans too far the other way; the alternative can feel a little too much like hiding the fact that even scientific rationalism is a spirituality or mythological framework, though a harmful one and all the more dangerous due to its own denial of itself as such. But being able to truly call another framework our own at this point, rather than another grasping as we fumble in the dark: that's a big step. Let's see.

## (5) A main reason for putting these pages together was the wish to strengthen affinities between anti-spe and anti-civ anarchists. We reject the characterisation of anti-speciesism as inherently civilised, along with the assumption that hunting other animals is a great way of rewilding ourselves. Do you disagree? How do you relate to anti-speciesism?

To start with the part that has already been theorised the most as part of the *Return Fire* experience and what influenced it,[28] anti-civilisation thought has been a very powerful, diverse, influential and in many ways positive interjection into anarchism; indeed, depending on how you define those terms and histories,[29] it could even be synonymous with it in certain cases. Of course it's only possible today to talk with real certainty about the legacy that thought identified in this way has within the anarchism of our lifetimes, in which cases anti-civ has often been a more recent (re-)arrival.

The instant problem that you have when trying to take anti-civilisation perspectives outside of an intellectual exercise or lazy way of describing 'the totality' of what we anarchists oppose, is that it becomes extremely slippery to define where civilisation begins and ends in our interactions, cultures, and aspirations. Possibly your above question, though its focus might be elsewhere, may be a good lens to see some of these problems through.

First let it be said that, while interest has been expressed towards this project by comrades within the anti-speciesist movement, it's not actually a tendency that is very well understood or researched by *Return Fire*, so please forgive any ignorance that comes across in this interview, and correspondence and critique are very welcome as always. (A glossary entry in back in vol.2

[26] See 'The Roots of a New Practice', by Knowing the Land is Resistance & Oxalis (magazine interview, 2015, & web, 2016)

[27] See 'Childhood, Imagination, and the Forest', by Sever (magazine article, 2015, & web)

[28] See 'L'Amour Civilisé', anonymous (magazine article [French], 2012, & web [English], 2014)

[29] See 'Episode 6: James Scott and 'The Art of Not Being Governed'' (Horizontal Power Hour broadcast & podcast, 2011)

outlined what the term speciesism meant here at *Return Fire* from an editorial perspective, but it wasn't a term that was used editorially from 2014 onwards due to some uncertainties and ambiguities that will be touched on soon.) As a result, this question would undoubtedly be more intelligently answered by others. Assuming that it is an outgrowth of animal liberation (and, in turn, animal rights) philosophy and practices, there are however at least some basic things to be said.

The lives, flourishing, meaning and personhood of other-than-humans – and the ability to re-think, question and assert what that means for the way we choose to live – is of great relevance to anti-civilisational anarchism (if not its very hallmark!) and, to be honest, to any anarchism of interest to *Return Fire*. Animal rights – and, more so, animal liberation – movements have powerfully shown within Westernised societies the way that certain of those other-than-humans are industrialised, tortured, trivialised, exploited and disposed of, as one symptom among many of a profoundly sick society. Animal liberation actions[30] have in many cases shown a bravery and commitment that highlights some essential traits for revolutionary struggle: the open-hearted, non-quantifiable need for attacking what is ugly in this world, rejection of the human-supremacist philosophies that are pervasive in Western civilisation, and determination to act in the face of overwhelming odds and social disapproval.

However, with the philosophies of Western civilisation as pervasive as mentioned above, it's possible that some ideas of how to attack some only strengthen other ones. Without knowing exactly which ways in which anti-speciesist thought has been attacked as "inherently civilised" as you mention, there have been plenty of intelligent, well-founded critiques of animal liberation and animal rights movements. They've been perhaps most important when made by those who actually conduct an active and respectful relationship with other-than-humans, that is often linked to their non-marketised subsistence activities: animal liberation/animal rights movements do not hold the monopoly on concern for the many cousins we get to share this incredible world with, and the degree to which many (often Global North, often urban) participants in those movements speak with authority about the liberation of those they have little-to-no connection with deserves acknowledging. Those critiques won't be rehearsed at length here when they're so widely available (though frequently smeared), but this curious definition of 'liberation' will be returned to.

In terms of why – despite these commonalities and respect for many of their actions – there is a hesitation from *Return Fire* towards anti-speciesism, let's talk about the focus that anti-speciesists seem to have and their framing. The term smacks of yet another tag-on to the check-box of liberal political correctness buzz-words (i.e. anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-ableist, anti-speciesist) well integrated into market choices and lifestyle options within capitalism at this point; buzz-words that of course all gesture towards something vital from any truly radical perspective, but which in the dominant culture we live within are dealt with as discrete issues to be resolved with the equality of enlightened citizens. While this is of course a framing that no doubt some anti-speciesists totally reject – not least yourselves, assuredly! – let's explain why this connection has been made here.

Liberalism posits subjects who exist in thin air, with their rights raised triumphantly in their hands (though always under the gaze of the State which supposedly guarantees them), not sub-

[30] See 'Communique of the Burning of the Slaughterhouse of Hotonnes', by White Moon, Black Pack (web, 2018)

jects messily entwined with each other and their world.[31] Animal liberation and animal rights, surely the spaces anti-speciesism emerges from, have overwhelmingly tended to fetishise and separate certain expressions of life (that get categorized as animals) from the rest. (Actually, this brings us back around to what our notions of a self or relationality are: animal rights in the West has a strong – although not exclusive – root in utilitarian philosophy, such choice characters as Jeremy Bentham with his famous Panopticon; and its calculation of what it considers the greatest good for the greatest number, each of that number shorn from their context and ecology and dropped into the prison cells viewed from the benevolent liberal's control tower.) If we can't look at ecologies rather than lone species with their rights (or lack of them), anti-speciesism would seem little more than liberalism writ large upon the whole world. While this may simply be a quibble based on a linguistic association – certainly, intelligent anti-speciesists do exist who reject the framework of rights at least in theory[32] – it does seem related to the rejection in the question above of hunting.

To include a range of cultural practices so vast under the simple heading of hunting (from the bloodsports of the rich and their subservients we know so well here in the UK to the annual deer harvest by Haudenosaunee archers for subsistence) seems to be a coded way of implying one thing; veganism. Without mischaracterising the wide range of practices that are subsumed under that label, nor rejecting the wishes of those with certain bodily constitutions or personal idiosyncratic strategies for considering themselves to have moral integrity in the consumerist world we currently inhabit, in terms of a totalising prescription veganism is riddled with Western philosophical biases,[33] from the Christian fear of death, to the liberal right-to-life, to the scientific parsing of the living world into discrete categories; itself greatly indebted to the Aristotelian 'great chain of being', with animals afforded a higher status than 'mere' plants, waters or soils (clearly harking back to the conversation above about animism). In a world where species extinctions are happening at a break-neck pace, and soils and waters so despoiled (not least for the needs of industrial agriculture, whichever diet it feeds), it does not seem a satisfactory response to simply bring certain animals one peg further up on the rights list, if we still see them (and ourselves) as isolated fragments and not totally embedded into matrices of interdependence that cannot be encapsulated in such simplistic and legalistic frameworks as "thou shalt not kill… except for non-animals".

It seems currently fashionable to refer to other-than-human animals as "comrades" in some circles (often spoken by people with a questionable amount of direct relation to such "comrades"), but surely solidarity must include the ability to actually learn from the person you are in solidarity with, if not actually (to be pedantic) a common project to 'stay solid' with. There is a great deal we can learn from observant participation in actual ecologies in meaningful ways,[34] trying to make those places we actually live from and eat from and die into, our habitats, not scenery: veganism does not seem to be one of those lessons however in any contexts personally experienced at the time of writing, and there is a tendency for people who are actually beginning to enter that dance (while rejecting industrialisation, monocropping, chemical abuse of the land and other practices that tangibly harm the entire web rather than periodically taking lives of specific individuals within it) to abandon veganism once they get going. This harks back to the earlier

[31] See 'Other Worlds', by Peter Gelderloos (web, late 2000's?)

[32] See 'The Very Idea of Rights', by Aragorn Eloff (web, 2016)

[33] See 'Veganism: Why Not; an Anarchist Perspective', by Peter Gelderloos (web, 2011)

[34] See 'Think different: Think local', by Andrew Robinson (web, 2010)

point about animal rights/animal liberation sometimes being (to put it mildly) tone-deaf to other movements for respectful co-existence with the living world, such as indigenous re-vitalisation movements: there have been indigenous people interested in or involved with animal liberation movements (one thinks of Rod Coronado,[35] of tawinikay[36]), including challenging aspects of modern-day 'traditionalism' in their own cultures – but they generally haven't subscribed to veganism. Attempts to synthesise the two[37] have seemed uneasy at best.

Probably as often, animal rights has pitted itself against indigenous lifeways, as with the famous anti-whaling and seal-hunting poster-children of previous generations (which by sleight of hand equated Inuit or Nunavut practices with the very same obscene commercial slaughters by big industry – dating back to the start of the Industrial Revolution which over-harvested whale products lubricated as the first global commodity, whose derivatives could once be found in every room in the house – which Rod Coronado and so many others were radicalised by and risked life and limb decisively sabotaging). Powerful movements against imperialism and domestic racism existed at the same time, and have not ceased since the European colonial powers began their project to export the capitalist social relations which have been poisoning the earth and industrialising its inhabitants ever since at a steadily more global scale. This was at a time when emerging Western movements for ecological awareness and animal rights had to choose between deepening and radicalising their understandings of the problem while finding solidarity with anti-colonial struggles, while recognising certain European peasant or herding practices as what has been called 'the environmentalism of the poor'; or, doubling down on some of Western culture's pre-existing cultural biases in a fatally-partial revolt against others.

The rest, as they say, is history. At the risk of over-focusing, the example used above is revealing: despite not even harvesting the white seal pups whose images were mobilised by animal rights and environmentalist groups in the 1970s, but only adult seals, Inuit hunters have been the targets of such groups ever since, further devastating colonised populations with the highest suicide rates in the world and severing cultural subsistence practices that have bound them together with their habitat since time immemorial (whereas the activities of industrial society – including its devout vegans – has been turning that habitat into a melting shipping lane in scarcely a handful of generations). In 2014 one of those groups, Greenpeace, stood down their thirty-plus-year campaign and apologised (and seeing how such large organisations are inarguably run as corporations[38] and with the same sensitivity to PR, this was probably cynically timed due to the higher social capital resulting from being 'pro-indigenous' now than in other moments); others continue their work. In 2017, environmentalist group Sea Legacy even attempted to smear Nunavut hunters of polar bears for their meat by claiming (with no foundation but their own racism, it turned out) that they denied global warming; from their air-conditioned offices, punching down on those inhabiting the most rapidly heating places on Earth. The same year, the Haudenosaunee archers mentioned above – just four years after their supposedly-protected-by-treaty rights to hunt and fish in what Europeans named 'southwestern Ontario' were finally recognised by its colonial government, under which indigenous people living on-reserve have three times the na-

[35] See 'My Heroes have Always Killed Cowboys', by Rod Coronado & Do or Die (magazine article, 2003, & web)

[36] See 'Autonomously and with Conviction: A Métis Refusal of State-Led Reconciliation' (presentation, zine & web, 2018)

[37] See 'Deconstructing Myths Surrounding Veganism & People of Color', by Sarambi (zine & web, 2017)

[38] See 'Green Capital and Environmental "Leaders" Won't Save Us', by Alexander Dunlap (web [via Wayback Machine], 2020)

tional rate of diabetes, linked to industrial diets – were confronted by animal rights demonstrators as they entered the area who screamed racist slurs and disrupted their traditional practice, as they have every year so far.

Lest it be said that the criticisms made here only apply to the notorious sell-outs of the environmental and vegan movements, let's take this month's article[39] by the anarchists of the Total Liberation Club, hosted by Freedom News. While taking more care to insist that theirs is not *"an argument to say all cultures must adopt a singular worldview or way of being"*, this supposedly more sophisticated stance is immediately undermined by their equation in the very first paragraph of a child eating rabbit – in what they approvingly describe as a *"famous vegan thought experiment"* – with not just "violence" (a meaninglessly broad, self-serving and incoherent category[40]) but "psychopathic tendencies". It's hard not to notice the symmetry between this stigmatisation and the experience of Tanya Tagaq, an Inuit musician (who has spoken out against factory farming while delineating it from her cultural legacy of hunting, and advocated action against the industrial meat and fast food industries) who in recent years shared a photo of her baby daughter with a seal her family had just killed, leading to her receiving death threats and witnessing petitioning to have her child taken away from her.

The lumping together under "violence" of subsistence practices with war-making or even serial killing – with Hannibal Lecter, to cite Total Liberation Club's assertion, who was not known to fill his victims mouths with snow with respect after taking their lives so their spirits would not have thirst on their onward journey, as Inuit hunters do with seals – finds resonance in another purportedly-enlightened (but actually deeply colonialist) reaction to such practices. The more recent revitalisation of whaling by Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth groups, who intended to hunt a whale, provoked a campaign against them. From 'Animal Rights, Imperialism and Indigenous Hunting'[41]:

> Many animal rights activists suggested to the Makah that instead of killing the whale they should 'count coup' – a Plains Indians practice which involved touching an enemy warrior as a demonstration of bravery. Makah artist Greg Colfax responded to this by saying: "I know nothing of counting coup […] But, from the folks I have talked to about it, it was an act committed between one warrior and another. We are not at war with the whales."

The gist of Total Liberation Club's text is discussing a recent academic study (yawn) that supposedly 'proves' – and although you'd have thought our movements had already established this knowledge through our own experience and struggles, now they have the Positive Evidence! – that *"[w]hat treatment is deemed morally appropriate for an animal can depend on whether the animal is characterized as "food.""* Like all covertly Eurocentric claims, neither the parts quoted from the study nor Total Liberation Club themselves mark the assertions they make as pertaining to a particular culture, while still (in Total Liberation Club's case) using the opportunity to poke fun at what they call *"corpse-eaters"* in general; but in Makah and many other societies, this finding would probably be something of an non-event.

[39] See 'Natural Born Liberationists', by Total Liberation Club (web, 2022)

[40] See 'Does Non-Violence Protect the State? The Forum, Edinburgh', (presentation & web, 2008)

[41] See 'Animal Rights, Imperialism and Indigenous Hunting', by Jessica Thornton (web, 2013)

Other cultures do not universally characterise certain other species merely as food, as that category clearly and derisively exists in alienated cultures like our own. They characterise them[42] as relatives.[43] Relatives in a great and unending cycle of dependency and responsibility, where nothing gives that is not given to and nothing eats that is not eaten. (And, for what it's worth given how far a cry this is from what is being discussed, it is certain that nothing consumed at *Return Fire* after shelling from bean-pods in our own gardens, picked up and plucked from the site of a road-kill, gathered from nut-trees or picked from coastline mollusk clusters, or shared by friends who host herds in their orchards, has felt like mere "food" in the same way as whatever products (vegan or not) that are collected from shop shelves. Perhaps it is ignorance to these experiences and their deep meaning that leads Total Liberation Club to identify, along with their report, any capacity to both *love* and *eat* animals as "moral acrobatics", rather than as one possible result of philosophical maturity.)

When the Makah hunt proceeded, members of Sea Defense Alliance made sure to spray chemical fire extinguishers into the faces of the whaling crew, shoot flares over their canoe, and threaten their lives. The same article on that hunt, harking back to the notorious '70s campaigns of Greenpeace, the Sea Shepherd Society and their like, cites a passage from another text with which to close this meditation on your question: *"The protest movement, while it cast aside speciesist attitudes, was unable to categorize Inuit seal hunting other than through its own ethnocentrically derived universalist perceptions of animal rights and values."*

If we are interested in liberation – the real kind, the kind that actually is self-directed and not imposed from outside – co-creating living landscapes where we are working with how everybody can find a niche for their people to live well and then die well, it seems more likely that the lessons other beings have to teach us will be more complex and subtle than us never hunting them. But of course practice could prove otherwise, as it would be distinct in each place; the burden of proof does, however, seem in veganism's corner at this point, especially in terms of what it is actually doing on its own doorstep rather than dictating as a totalising morality masquerading as strategy. News from anti-speciesist projects on what they are currently doing would be appreciated!

The framing of your question does lend itself to projecting possible pathways in the abstract,without the context that makes such decisions meaningful. So apologies that this answer may also have strayed into general principles – as this topic too often does! – that may or may not prove the best in any particular situation created through our struggles, and seem like a kind of 'best-case scenario' take rather than reflecting the actual realities as we try to move towards food autonomy (for want of a better short-hand descriptor[44]) in our own landbases, with whatever seems appropriate there. (It's a tangent that will not be taken further here, but one controversy of animal rights/animal liberation movements has been their tendency to compare – or, in the worst cases, equate – the oppression they are concerned by with the historic struggle for the emancipation of African slaves of the Triangular Trade; little comparison has been made however between these activists and the white abolitionists who often had little interest in the enslaved Africans' actual aspirations or self-determination, but instead wanted to further 'civilise' them into Christian morality. Obviously objectionable practices of such activists like

[42] See 'Mel Bazil on "Anarchy, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Decolonization"; Imprisoned Kevin "Rashid" Johnson denied medical care' (Final Straw Radio broadcast & podcast, 2014)

[43] See 'Part 2 of Mel Bazil on Decolonization, Anarchism, Solidarity and Indigeneity' (Final Straw Radio broadcast & podcast, 2014)

[44] See 'Against Self-Sufficiency; the Gift', by Sever (magazine article, 2015, & web)

de-clawing cats they live with, dictating veganism for other-than-humans whose diets they control, etc., have elsewhere come under scrutiny, but this 'saviour' kind of so-called solidarity – a solidarity without learning as the base-line of respect – seems relevant to the wish to impose blueprints onto a being or area without any openness to their partnership in that process.) Doubtless there will be places where hunting by whatever definition is not an appropriate interaction for the time being; doubtless in other places, it is.

Conversely, this is not a unique failing – other strains such as primitivism (only one of many subsets of anti-civilisation thought within anarchism, and whose adherents we do not reject out of hand) have also at times done the same with their prescriptions for "hunter-gatherer life" regardless of the location, and even when it has tried not to[45] has tended to the blueprint-imposed-from-above model in its discourse when it comes to human lifeways.

Although spoken in a different context, some words from Peter Gelderloos' latest book[46] feel relevant to this:

> Reflecting the class interests and the worldview of the technocrats themselves, all of these proposals enact power as a lever that operates on inert Others. To them, the territory is a map, and theirs is the hand that holds the pencil that will redraw it. Deep down, they can never trust the intelligence of the territory (nor locate themselves within it). They cannot surrender themselves to the dialogue, the dance, with a specific territory, nor meld into the reciprocal relationship that is *the earth healing itself.* Modern day missionaries, they fail to accept that they are not needed to save anyone. And that is why they remain a part of the problem.

Your question of how to re-wild ourselves rests on a further question of what is wildness; another conversation that requires considerable de-contamination of Western dualisms, and one that unfortunately time has run out for here.

## (6) Traditional environmentalist discourse singles out humanity as a uniquely destructive force on the planet, thereby strengthening the illusion of human supremacy. A more subtle anti-humanistic stance might point out that human ecocide is as natural as anything, but runs the risk of endorsing passivity in the face of mass extinction. How can we escape this dilemma? Can we empower each other to combat civilisation without treating human activity as something special?

Working out why this civilisation – Western and now global civilisation (and not, to our knowledge, previous human civilisations that have risen and fallen) – has achieved something

[45] See 'Feralculture — Discussing Nodal Land Projects', by Andrew Badenoch & Black and Green Review (magazine article, 2015, & web)

[46] See 'The Solutions are Already Here: Strategies for Ecological Revolution from Below', by Peter Gelderloos (book, 2022)

that does indeed seem 'special', the immanent turning of a whole geological epoch with world-wide consequences, is not a conversation about humans *per se*: contra to the framing of the 'anthropocene' and so on.

Once again, as with 'civilisation', were are dealing with slippery terms here. Is human ecocide as natural as anything? 'Natural', in this context, can become somewhat ambiguous as a term: is everything that has already happened at least once therefore the natural pattern? At what point does the impact of a way of living in the world (including a result like extinction, which is a constant background activity) cross a line and become 'ecocide'? Previous cultures across the world (primarily those living under the State, it would seem) in the last few thousands of years have periodically entered phases of imbalance, sometimes fatally: but their effects were always somewhat limited to their own locale or bio-region, and – if we dismiss the State-centric eduction that trains us to privilege those cases over the many more and varied lifeways that existed even across the same timeline – pretty unusual given the large distribution of our species across the world.

(The 'megafauna extinctions' posited as occuring across Turtle Island, so-called 'Australia', etc., often cited to the contrary despite often happening after what seems like many thousands of years of cohabitation with humans, are sometimes admitted by scientists studying them to be somewhat enigmatic: it's seen by some as somewhat mysterious exactly how the die-offs came to pass – despite the common stereotype of the rapacious and insatiable human will to hunt to excess that conveniently mirrors the capitalist idea of human nature – and increasingly is also being linked to climatic changes; and it seems like, on an ecological level, the arriving humans adopted the functions that the previous inhabitants were contributing in the area, such as the grassland-creating and — maintaining previously done by large ungulates, etc. This may be linked to non-equilibrium – as opposed to equilibrium[47] – notions of nature itself; modernity has generally insisted on viewing nature as an already-completed product to be maintained and/or mined, clashing strongly with various cultures' ideas of an unspooling and endlessly dynamic reality which never stops changing. Whatever happened, a kind of reciprocity was regained: to stick with that specific example, the site of those previous mega-fauna extinctions in what colonisers named 'California' was overwhelmingly described in 'explorer' and settler accounts as inexpressibly fertile and abundant in wildlife at the point of European arrival; flights of pigeons blocking out the sun, grizzlies seen thirty to forty times daily, the sheer number of pods of whales, elk herds as far as the eye could see: yet coexisting with human cultures who certainly extensively performed care for and co-shaped their habitats,[48] sometimes drastically. The Yurok peoples whose territory this included have oral history telling of the *wo'gey*, beings who inhabited the land before the Yurok and had to teach them how to perform ceremonies that could restore the earth's balance, before departing from the face of the land. This does not seem like the dreaded touch of 'naturally human' ecocide from where *Return Fire* is standing, whereas the ongoing genocide and ecocide – in fact, one and the same – which followed, leaving dead zones and tech clusters in its wake, tell a different story altogether, again foreign to assertions of human inevitabilities.)

[47] See 'On Non-Equilibrium and Nomadism: Knowledge, Diversity and Global Modernity in Drylands (and Beyond …)', by Sian Sullivan and Katherine Homewood (journal article, 2010, & web)

[48] See 'Collision of Worlds: the Pause between Wilderness and Civilization in California', by Chloe (zine, 2015, & web)

And those few thousands of years of occasional disruption or even collapse are a drop in the bucket of the species' existence on the planet. Whereas the culture that has brought extinctions across the world up to 10,000 times the 'background rate' can be more precisely defined; at some point, listing previous examples of lifeways out of balance just becomes deflection in the historical moment we are in; hence risking endorsing passivity, like you say, but also cementing an ethnocentric bias that those accustomed to wearing the masks and armour of the West have been raised with and continue to perpetrate from the highest and most vaunted institutions of our society.

Once again, we are faced with the legacy of another Western project, the Enlightenment practice of extending a certain idea of what 'being human' meant across a larger part of the population (compared to previously being confined to elites) but only if they conformed – or were at least attempting to – to the model of humanity those same enlightened elites subscribed to: those 'beyond the pale' (a term coined by British colonists in Ireland to refer to the peasants living from the commons[49] and subsistence-farming outside the British plantations) were and still are subjected to colonisation and genocide due to their 'less-than-human' status. Hilariously (or rather, what would be hilarious if the stakes were not so high), members of that same elite – scientists, philosophers, statesmen – since the 1960s have turned around and decided that the cause of the ecological crises crowding in from all sides is not their philosophies, their scientific world-views, their economic system, their systematic 'cratoforming'[50] to destroy the commons so as to make life outside the State close to unlivable, but… humanity, for the first time now including even those who get none of the supposed 'benefits' of inclusion in the Humanity Club, just the expropriation. And Western environmentalism has faithfully sung that elite's tune.

This form of 'humanity' was, of course, linked at the time of the Enlightenment explicitly to whiteness, and more recently has taken the more coded form of being associated with 'living whitely'; living without roots and culture beyond that of a State-imposed and State-produced identity, whatever your ancestry; pledging allegiance to the social order and not the living world. Conversely, if we are interested in re-establishing our roots, sinking them down into the world that feeds us and is fed by us, the question is less whether we are 'human' than whether we are held in the loving, capricious, demanding, and meaningful embrace of a specific place, a specific habitat: a Somewhere. This is the way that we escape this false question of 'which we are' (inherently destructive? inherently masterful?); by becoming a part, rather than standing apart. It is worth noting that across the world, people fought tooth and nail against being incorporated into this Enlightenment notion of humanity, defending their dignity, their commons and their other-than-human relatives. In many places, they still fight.

We don't know if we will succeed in escaping this cage, and certainly we will not end the phenomenon of extinction (despite the wishes of the liberal right-to-life) – rather, at some point or another, it will end us – but attempting it feels like a more promising prospect than navel-gazing about how singularly important our activity is in a metaphysical sense; whether we are describing that as God's gift or as a curse. In this respect, the call for submissions for *No Path* was really excellent in posing this: *"Beyond these more specific concerns, we also wish to pose a riddle: How are we to affirm the here and now, with all its toxic overflows, not pretending to be*

[49] See 'Commoning and Scarcity: a Manifesto Against Capitalism', by Peter Gelderloos (magazine article, 2012, & web)

[50] See 'They Ain't Got No Class: Surpluses and the State', by Peter Gelderloos (chapter 8 of 'Worshiping Power: An Anarchist View of Early State Formation', 2017 & web)

*somewhere else?"* The here-and-now is far from ideal,[51] as it states, but "not pretending to be somewhere else" might mean becoming a part of what life still exists where you stand, however polluted, enclosed, devalued;[52] digging into the earth and shattering the concrete that stops it from breathing, shattering the abstract and placeless 'humanity' that is foisted upon us rather than identifying with it over our own Somewhere.

## (7) Can we fight without hope? What's the point in struggling once we abandon the illusion of really changing the world?

The world is always changing. And it is a conceit of a superior vantage-point looked down from to try to delineate exactly by which agency – by whose instigations – that takes place; it is equally foolish to rule anyone's agency out.

The best imaginable from here sometimes feels like it would be that things balkanise[53] to such a degree that there ceases to be one global system, while we keep up whatever travelling networks of solidarity and sharing we want to, but we could still speak of worlds we lived within rather than one looming and impersonal World, faceless and impassive: in these worlds, surely what we would decide could effect changes, as seems to have been the case in various uprisings and so-called "collapses" in history. (This is what historians dismiss as Dark Ages; ages dark for historians and the States that employ them as their telescopes, certainly, but in which people continued sailing their boats, throwing their pots, singing their songs, and not counting their days away labouring for priest nor emperor.)

But faced with the continuation of this system, the assertion of texts like *Desert*[54] that we will not succeed in throwing off our chains (though, as even that author notes, so much is still possible short of that lofty goal) contains an antidote to the top-down, control-room view that too many revolutionaries have harboured since the era of failed modernist revolutions from France to the United States – which failed even when nominally winning – with their fatal dream of imposing a new regime over all of society, devastating remaining indigenous and peasant commons: however, often it also participates in the twin error of thinking that we really know what is and isn't possible. Rather than the revolutions in the spirit of Napoleon, Cromwell and Washington – grandiose blueprints applied by the tip of a bayonet – there remains the more magical sense of possibility, that all laws exist to be broken in the most unlikely of circumstances, that life is change and motion and no walls are built that hold back the tides or vines forever. But change is always the child of action, not inaction.[55]

Though it's a mischaracterisation (albeit a common one) to lump *Desert* in with this stuff really, there's been a shift over the last decade or so in radical (or radical-adjacent) green movements away from insurrectionary and/or revolutionary aspirations and into passivity, that also – probably not coincidentally – accompanied those movements going more online and becoming more consumable image-based rather than rooted in action or even so-called 'lifestyle'-ism: rather, more *Like*-style-ism! This started with a useful demoting of our exclusive rationalist

[51] See 'Auschwitz-Disneyland', anonymous (magazine article [French], 2012, & web [English], 2013)
[52] See 'Land and Freedom: an Old Challenge', by Sever (magazine article, 2014, & web)
[53] See 'Episode 89 – What is Anarchism in 2018 with Andy' (The Brilliant podcast, 2018)
[54] See 'Desert', anonymous (book, 2011, & web)
[55] See 'Equinox at the Headwaters', by Sever (magazine article, 2018, & web)

agency and saviour delusions,[56] but has been taken by some in a direction ending up with the dribble that fills many Dark Mountain Project blogs and the like (not to dismiss everything from those spaces or even that specific platform) and, by de-linking these forms of needed awareness and ecocentrism from the struggle for human liberation against the capitalist machine – including struggles that don't use the same imagery or buzz-words but are inarguably artifacts of and responses to the same ecological crises, such as migration struggles – and the re-establishment of our part in multi-species commons, risk co-optation by "eco-"fascisms[57] (Left or Right[58]) that have advanced in the same period.[59] Actually, in this context, you can draw out one of the redeeming threads of what you could call individualism: the stubborn refusal to be ruled, despite calculations of victory, that, paradoxically – or is it? – can perform a *social* function of catalysing agency by contagion. (What direction that goes in is relevant to ask before acritically celebrating it, and certainly it isn't an exclusivity of individualism; still, that intransigence is a part of the ecology of resistance today whether you like it or not.)

Hope is not reducible to a philosophical question, a yes or no choice. In a particular moment, we either feel it or we don't. A certain tyrannical optimism tells us that if we don't feel it, it is our own failing; another parallel tyrant, that if we do we are just fools. But this is just confusing emotional states with analysis, however related the two might be. But maybe, despite the terrifying loss of control it would entail us feeling, we will see that our rational analysis is not everything. If we have hope but no imagination or determination, it will help us not at all. Imagination and no hope, we might just still have enough within us to stop the mist of the commodity and its tranquilising dreams from settling too heavily upon us, might still arm against that sickly dream. Not coincidentally, being told that we should have hope to change the world (through our consumer choices and so-called 'green' technologies, for example) has – in the eras of the society of first the spectacle, and then the spectator-producer of today's media climate – accompanied one of the most rabid attacks on the faculties of the imagination by the 'culture industry', to the point that transhumanism and the settling of other planets seem more believable than the defeat of the State in our lifetimes, despite both being based on just as shaky ground.

In certain moments of the struggle, to advance we can and must feel hope; but it is not something that exists on tap. Recovering the imagination, however – which is more of a capacity to collectively develop than an individual choice to make, although, contra the nihilists,[60] we must individually choose to allow ourselves to develop it – would allow us to live through the moments (months, years, decades) when hope is not in our grasp. And it might be the key to another just as extra-rational dynamic in our struggles: we fight because we like to, because we somehow know – even as, in the listless slumber of rationalism, we've forgotten – that we are still fighting on in the hearts and dreams of those yet to come, as they appear ghost-like in our dreams; as we are still fighting the war while our ancestors were falling, that this moment is not just this moment, that their palaces are always falling and their dreams of domination always

[56] See 'A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be', by Ursula K. Le Guin (anthology 'Dancing at the Edge of the World', 1989, & web)

[57] See 'Lies of the Land: Against and Beyond Paul Kingsnorth's Völkisch Environmentalism', by Out of the Woods Collective (web, 2017)

[58] See 'Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism: Andreas Malm's Authoritarian Leftist Agenda', by Klokkeblomst (magazine supplement, 2021)

[59] See 'Know Your Enemy: A Green Anarchist Response to the Christchurch Shooter's Manifesto', by Twm Gwynn (web [via Wayback Machine], 2019)

[60] See 'The Nihilist Recuperation', anonymous (zine & web, 2013)

reforming (and so are our conspiracies), that anarchy is in the doing and not the arriving, that Claudia Lopez and Nedd Ludd and Bhagat Singh and Queen Nanny and Mauricio Morales and Red Cloud and Maria Nikiforova and Isabelle Eberhardt and Hermann der Cherusker will ride again, were always riding, have always ridden.

Finally, these answers to your kind questions are dedicated to those in our movements who are spending their time and energy tending to the needs for emotional, re-productive and spiritual survival (tasks often feminised and left to those themselves facing similar crises and oppressions) and to ensuring those targeted by repression[61] are neither isolated nor forgotten, whose efforts anarchist circles often value the least right now compared to, say, theoreticians, social media or travelling personalities, and party-hosters… or unoriginal counter-information projects like *Return Fire*.

*R.F., May 22nd, 2022*

[61] See 'Germany: Rounding up the Munich Raids', by a few anarchos from Bavaria (web, 2022)

Return Fire, No Path
"A Web of Relations & Tensions"
— interview with Return Fire
summer 2022

https://returnfire.noblogs.org