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INTRO





This is a book without hope, but hopefully not without inspiration. There is nothing here that suggests that real, meaningful change is possible even by our best efforts. There are no starry-eyed proclamations of people power, no righteous "speak truth to power" rhetoric, no holdover pacifism.

What is there, then? Questions, speculations, and possibilities, for starters. Human origins are pondered, futures are predicted. The current state of affairs is pilloried. In many ways these conversations are still raw. If there is a critical tendency, it is toward anarchy and away from industrial civilization, although it is not consistent.

The interviews at times seem unfocused. They are minimally edited. The goal is a transparent process rather than a





manicured question and answer session. This book is a work in progress, and the stopping points were reached due to time constraints, not necessarily reaching a good point of conclusion. Hopefully the conversations and correspondences will continue.

Importantly, these interviews aren't political, in that the authors aren't adherents to any particular political ideologies. With all allegiances dropped, they are free to find their own way. Theirs is not political writing, but it is purposeful in its critiques of society, culture, production, class, gender roles—plus all the other the other aspects that make the whole of social relations.

The resultant body of work defies categorization. Carolyn's *The Beans of Egypt, Maine* is far more than a novel just as





Derrick's *A Language Older Than Words* is far more than a memoir. Kirk's *Rebels Against the Future* is similarly expansive. The first two especially weave personal struggles with unflinching social criticism, while Kirk's book has combined historical analysis with explicit condemnation of contemporary phenomenon.

These three books are my primary frames of reference for each author. They are my starting points, and although I've read more from each author, they remain my favorites; the most influential to my thinking. Familiarity with those works will help put the interviews into context. Hopefully they are a good read regardless.

The correspondence with Carolyn Chute doesn't need much introduction. We've been writing for about three years





and her letters inspired me to do this project. Her best-known novel, *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*, was a best seller in the 1980's and a critical favorite. With her 1997 *Snow Man* (in which a militiaman assassinates a U.S. senator) Chute began to fall out of favor with the liberal culture establishment, and the bad reviews commenced. Not only were there real guns, violence, and sex in the novel, but Carolyn had real guns at home. Her involvement in the 2nd Maine Militia was now a derogatory caveat to scornful reviews. Nevertheless, Carolyn has pressed on with her writing and several books in the works.

My phone conversation with Derrick Jensen took place on an incredibly tense afternoon a few days before the most recent Iraq war began. His words have only become more relevant and urgent in the intervening two and a half years.





The perfect storm of human and ecological catastrophes has coalesced and gained strength. Derrick's referencing of Nazi Germany seems less far-fetched now that we've witnessed civilized debates on torture as detainees lay dead, mutilated, or locked away forever. The rate of destruction intensifies every day. The question posed by Derrick that continues to haunt me: "how much closer can it get?"

Kirk Sale's responses echo this theme. Is a collapse imminent, are we feeling the effects now, will it be a mortal blow to industrial civilization? He says yes to all three. He puts forth an unusual answer to a question that I was perhaps a bit naive in asking- "where did we go wrong?" You can see his answer, and my disagreement in my second letter. But still, it is useful and important to ponder our origins as a species, and to feel a continuity with the whole





history of human experience. To realize that the way we live now is not the way we always have, nor does it always have to be. We could choose to live differently, even like our ancestors of millennia ago if we wanted to. Undoubtedly, I wouldn't choose the same lifeways as Kirk, but so be it. The lesson is in connection, and against the postmodern condition of listlessness and alienation.

Any opinions are welcome, you can write me through the Eberhardt Press address at the beginning of this book.

Keep stirring the pot.

-Sam Bain







CAROLYN CHUTE





Dear Sam-

We still have your picture up in the kitchen. Altho I'd never recognize you if you appeared in person because you're wearing a gas mask in the picture. Maybe if you always wear one, I'd know you anywhere!

I'm at the Dormer Institute until May and then again in the fall. I was at the Macdowell Colony in New Hampshire last fall. Am working on three novels at once. Eeeek. I can only do one letter a day and since I get anywhere from 3 to 15 letters a day. It is a bad scene. Maybe about 30 to 40 letters a week. So if I answer 6 a week, or even as few as 5 a week because sometimes I have a doc appointment or something, well that leaves 35 letters in the pile. It makes me feel so badly as I really want to answer them all.





Yes, I'd love to do the interview. I'll not let it get buried in the pile, not even the high priority pile where your other card is now. I even know which high priority pile it is. Right over there on top of those 2 boxes and 2 step ladders. It's mail I had hoped to answer last week and the week before, but had then hoped to get through most of it by mid March. You see the dilemma? Cause more comes.

But the interview I'll do not in my letter writing time but in my work time so it will get done.

Okay so if you want to do the interviews as letters or even a list of questions. I do interviews that way for literary magazines from time to time. Whichever. It's fine by me.

Hopefully by mid May, my agent will have my two-o-gy which





is a two-part story about resistance. Anarcho-mutualism. I wrote it thru the early, mid, and late 1990's but Harcourt Brace didn't want it. They wanted a woman's novel about feminist angst over relationships. I told them I have a personal relationship with resistance. I don't have any feminist angst. Maybe i would have 50 years ago. But now I have developed a disgust for God. Yeah, I believe in God/ Mother Nature and it is a TOTAL Shithead.

I don't go to protest marches anymore (even when I'm done working) because they have become anti-Bush rallies. Not anti-industrial- anti master-servant-society-anti-consumer-anti-Pharaoh-faceless power, anti-Vast-consumer-system, anti-Iron-curtain-anti-closed doors protests.

I was kicked out anyway. The professional liberal class didn't





want me anymore because I'm against putting millions of poor people in jail for having guns. I'm against disarming the resistance, too (perhaps eventually all the poor will join the resistance, so it's all one in the same). And there are more poor every minute. These liberal ladies and gents said I could come to marches and rallies but not speak. Just applaud their speeches about weird ethereal unconditional kick-me peace. Forced schooling is peace. Death is peace. Polite society is peace. Ack! I'm done. And I don't kid myself thinking my agent can sell my work to a paying publisher.

These big publishers are not going to publish a book that bad mouths their sacred cows: forced schooling, polite society, etc. Especially school. And to do it with guns in the same story, guns not used in drive by shootings and hold ups, but as citizens' defense, that would be the last straw.





My novel Snow Man published in 97 was reviewed by reviewers who were pissing themselves over the guns but especially the sex which they fumed was not politically correct. Reviewers must have been teacher's pets. They sound suspiciously just like schoolteachers. Go to the hall! Go to the fringes!

It makes me sad to see all America's young people having only two choices, military or vagabonding. Vagabonding is sweet for a little while. But in one's 30's it would be natural to want to settle, at least with a permanent tribe. As years go by, a person's physical make-up is different. It gives a person a feeling of needing a support group. But also, without land, we can't grow food and fibers, or collect sun and wind energy or make biodiesel. My wish is that Anarcho Mutual Communities can be established on land, rather





than gypsies as pigeons and scavengers of a wrong society. Because gypsies all added up will still consume the same stuff the ownership society has had manufactured.

I've been reading Anarchy In the Age of Dinosaurs and I understand why it was written. It gives dignity to america's homeless young people, and an exchange of ideas. And that is good and true and right, and should continue. But my wish is that there would be a way to keep land in the Anarcho-Mutual community. Land is ownership. But land is everything. It is the source. Some land, Some travel. The whole.

Well, I'm rambling. I'll be looking for your next letter.

-Carolyn





Dear Carolyn,

Thanks for the letter. It's exactly what I hoped for for this project, a correspondence not a question and answer session. No right questions or answers. There's an idea for the future of voluntary schooling. No more tests. No more hall monitors. No more authority figures.

Well, I am at work at the moment, making next to nothing but at least I'm doing nothing. Thank heavens for employee sabotage and theft (can you steal back your own time?) for the shred of revenge it provides to the working and the poor. It's nowhere near enough, but at least it feels good.

I agree that we need land. I'm about sick of my own constant vagabonding. It is useful to be on your toes, to be able to





escape the worst of the system. There are some places I loved ten years ago that I can't stand now- the lower east side of New York City for instance. Some times you have to move. But in less volatile places, out of fast- forward cities, it can be amazing and important to stay put and get to know a piece of land and how to live with it.

There are two refuges I see- inhabit the rotten insides of civilization, the decaying post industrial core of various uncool places, or straight to the edges- land far away from cities. I'm disgusted watching the cancer of cool engulf this new city where I live, trampling the poor as it goes. I'm ready to go.

What's up with cool anyway? Cool is the opposite of warm,





I suppose. Cool is detachment, aloofness, a fractured state of nothingness. Cool people barter in sarcasm and irony, trading communication for meaningless quips. All of which is fine for industry and government, who don't have to convince anyone that their system is worth believing in, but merely that it is not worth resisting.

You're having trouble with your publishers. You aren't cool, you aren't rich, you don't live in the big cities or the hip small ones. Another "Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius" may be what they are looking for. Books that eschew meaning for ultra-sarcastic nothingness. Maybe nothing is all there is left for the elitist authors to say to there wealthy liberal clientele. Fox news and reality tv ascendant, Manhattanite journalists and high culture novelists gone the





way of the dinosaurs. I could do without either side.

I've wondered for so long how this culture has so successfully hidden, erased, or failing these two, demonized poor people. TV, movies, and books ignore the poor almost entirely. On the local news, sandwiched in between a segment super celebrity whoever and another on \$100,000 Recreational Vehicles, the poor make an appearance. Unfortunately, its the "meth watch" segment featuring a parade of handcuffed, shabbily dressed poor whites (probably wrongfully) accused of cooking up drugs. Your novels have brought the struggles of poor people out into the open. I wonder what the response was as they came out. Patronizing? Sympathetic? Confused?

-Sam





Dear Sam,

Am overwhelmed here. The usual apologies for taking so long to get back.

I would apologize to you about the small type of this typewriter, but I know you are young. I am an old hen and can hardly stand using this thing for more than 5 minutes. As it is I need a magnifying glass for the directions on Tylenol bottles and all said in Anarchist zines. This typewriter is only slightly better.

I used to have an electronic typewriter. It was fast. Had normal- sized type. It erased. And quiet, too. That's all I ask. But when it broke, the company (Canon) wouldn't send the parts to the repair guy. They suggested I buy a computer.





But I dont want a computer. Free country, right?

Eventually I broke down and went to a typewriter store for a new typewriter but all they had was toy typewriters. Loud. Tiny type. They have governors on them. They are made like an easter basket- hollow and bouncy. The daisy wheel would snap letters off. I had to replace the 25\$ daisy wheel once a week! I just finished a 3,000 page two-o-gy manuscript and it has been expensive. As it turns out I had to replace the typewriter itself every two months. Maybe three. I have a mountain of typewriters piled up out under that oak tree across the dooryard.

During this time, my agent mailed me an awesome older typewriter. But the postal manglers mangled.





My friend Evelyn mentioned the same thing you did in your last letter, about the nothingness in many books today. It seems to me that if a novel is going to have power but is not a murder mystery, thriller, war story, etc., that it has to have authors who have experienced being a people. Not people. But A people. There is no love in paradise. And there are no surprises in a system, and if authors nowadays are raised by THE SYSTEM, DESIGNED BY THE SYSTEM, or rather SELF-MODELED AFTER THE SYSTEM in order to be a SUCCESS, and to please the SCHOOLS with EXCELLENCE and ACHIEVEMENT... well there are no surprises going to come from that remote control robot. You are right about the response to the Beans, same with other books, a mixed reaction. But Snow Man had the most interesting response. The Feminists and Peace folk of the buffer Class Reviewing Machine wanted to murder me, but





instead worked very hard to give me a non-violent death by starvation.

Don't you just love the definitions of words like "Peace" and "Education" and "Democracy" when the SYSTEM defines them through its robots?

"Democracy" is one of my favorites. Today it means this: All the people of a given "nation" vote for two guys picked by the megamammoneers but the population is as uninformed as a bunch of waving, wiggling three day old babies. PR, schools, funny news assures that they are feeling ENTHUSIASTIC about their "choice" for prez or guber or congress or house of lords or whatever. Sometimes they aren't full throttle enthusiastic but they say (with virtuous twinkles in their eyes) "I am voting for the lesser of the two evils."





And I love this one: "dumb." Such and such a prez is "dumb".

Considering who is the dumbest, the population or the candidate or inaugurated "choice" whose scripts are written by billion dollar think tanks made up by geniuses who left home for "opportunities" and excitement and "bettering one's self". Considering that aforementioned think-tanks are modeling their client's scripts after what they have found out in polls and studies to be what wins over MOST of the population in order to create ENTHUSIASM and DIVISION. Considering this, who is the DUMBEST?

Now of course all this "democracy" has a purpose. The megamen want to dictate to the masses but if they call themselves what they are: dictators (or Pharaohs or Tsars) there might be a COMING TOGETHER OF THE PEOPLE





and meanwhile and soon after, a REVOLUTION.

But if you create a theater where everyone participates....the theater piece called FREE COUNTRY DEMOCRACY AREN'T WE LUCKY SO MUCH CHOICE AND EXCELLENCE APLENTY which includes the IDIOT OTHER GUYS, THE OTHER PARTY, The D-Party or R-Party and THEIR AWFUL candidates and inaugurated AWFUL whatevers, then there is PEACE and quiet and the Megamammoneers can go about their business with smooth sailing and no sharks (sharks who wear berets and carry AK-47's and Bushmasters). Oh no, no sharks. Just clams and oysters which smile and either wave the flag or burn the flag, but that's just fine. That's what the flags are for, to save the dictators own actual flesh some pain.





Oh yes, America is bringing democracy to the WHOLE world because democracy is just another word for soft fascism. The word pharaoh means faceless and unrestrained power.

I had this idea last year before the election of the Pharaoh's present Mouthpiece (and the shill that lost) where if I could get enough people together we could get a hearse (I have a friend who has three) or just a pickup truck with a coffin in back and on the sides of the hearse or truck would read: THE ELECTIONS ARE DEAD.

Then there'd be several cars following... all going slowly through the parking lots of malls and the windows of cars would be wide open and inside all these people wearing black dressy funeral clothes wailing and weeping and sobbing and keening LOUDLY.





Or at least just show up at the polls and drive slowly past the busy ones or just park a legal distance away and have other co- conspirators with protest signs saying SHOOT YOUR TV. And VOTING IS STUPID IF THE ELECTIONS ARE RIGGED. And BURN YOUR BALLOT! And THE ELECTIONS ARE DEAD.

But I was depressed last fall and I am not an organizer just a hermit writer with a lot of friends. And all my friends were depressed, too.

I am getting ready to read PACIFISM AS PATHOLOGY again. I have been burned by pacifists and disgusted by them, but I also disgust myself because because altho I'm not FOR pacifism, I am not exactly out there dynamiting anything either. Ward C. says most pacifists are just giving





lip service to pacifism because they take no risks or few risks. So I guess that makes me a person who gives lip service to real revolution because I believe it's the only way to stop the Pharaoh (Unrestrained Power) but am really just a shy wimpy old lady.

True, I do have a AK-47 and an SKS. But I just feel like a well-armed old lady, not a soldier.

Here's the thing. I have shot my mouth off a lot about how gun control is just about disarming the poor or at least a lot of them. Lots of others won't give up their guns. So they become criminals because, unlike the buffer class, they can't duck when the law men throw the book at them. They can't afford to get out on a technicality. And if it involves permits, they can't afford permits to begin with. And also the





poor are more apt to have previous charges due to the same lawyer problems... charges for puffing a joint or selling a joint or whatever. Also, I have a sneaking suspicion that there's no AK's allowed in the homeless shelter.

So this worries me, all this virtuous Democrat and pacifist stuff about gun control. The government has nothing against guns, Democrat party leaders have nothing against guns, just as long as the poor don't have them because the poor might organize, might become armed Robin Hoods, or King Arthurs, or Panthers...Black Panthers, Red Panthers, Yellow Panthers, Pink Panthers and god forbid PANTHERS.

The government may fear a radical takeover less than it fears the people it preys on using SELF DEFENSE, like the Waco guys did. The Mount Carmel folks shot down a helicopter





and cops climbing in the windows who thought the people inside would lie down and whimper found out what SELF DEFENSE means.

So the Clinton-era gun control hysteria was probably not hysteria but a well-thought out control and genocide scheme.

So I was invited to do a talk at a nuke sub launching. I am indeedy against the Empire (Pharaoh...whatever word works)... I am against the Empire having even a squirt gun, let alone big weapons. If all it had was a squirt gun, it would command some loyal soldier or cop to drown a baby with it or poke out an old lady's eye. Because the Empire is not about self-defense.

Three days after I get the invite, the guy writes back and





says his group has changed its mind, that I was uninvited to do the talk with Kathy Kelly and other decent people because I am for guns and after all an "Aegis is just a big gun."

I wrote him a few letters and he me but I concluded that this was a religion with him or he is crazy.

First of all, I'm not for guns, I'm for people. Guns, like hoes and roofs, keep people alive. I could kill a few people with a roof (collapsing) or help them. It's all in the intent and what you are trying to keep out. Life has a lot more moving parts than what this guy seemed to see.

But anyway, I was cancelled. He said I could come to rally and march and clap and cheer for other speakers, but not





speak. Anarchists etc. protested, they wore camo and 2nd Maine Militia patches to the rally and yelled "Where's Carolyn!" A musician cancelled his performance. The internet got loaded with argument. So okay. But I realized there was something of the world of Jr. high in the world of activism. The honor students were taking things over and us kids from the poor farm or little houses and farms who HATED to be in those stupor structures (schools) to begin with were FORCED to be there but not allowed to participate. Well, guess what, I wasn't forced to be at this event. So I stayed home. It was a hot day. I read my speech to my husband and dogs and listened to a tape of the musician (Ethan Miller) who cancelled his appearance at the rally.

I started to HATE the word peace. Did PEACE really mean





BEHAVE? Seems so. I was becoming a little nauseated by PEACE people. The husband and I walk around the house doing imitations of them in squeaky voices.

So I was going to put Ward Churchill in the thank yous of my two-o-gy if it ever gets published. After Snow Man, I may never be published again especially after I don't apologize for it which New York reviewers said should be forthcoming.

A friend of mine is Ray Luc Levasseur. I think he's a brace and principled and nice person. But what happened to him in jail...in the cage...I can't bear to think of anyone I love...(or anyone at all) going thru that. So since that is probably the price that could be paid, I have always thought that what we need is for ENOUGH support to develop before we make such a sacrifice mean something to very many because right





now the pharaoh's media just fogs the news and shrivels it and shrinks it and blacks it out. And for most of America, the big medias are how they get news.

And then there's the stupor structures. As long as the schools are sacred cows, we are fucked.

I know tons of people who are against gun control but they are republicans and say stuff like "But no guns for criminals" and they want prohibitions which create criminals and whole criminal cultures. And they are for beating down the poor and outlawing unions ec etc so that... well, as I said before, there's no guns allowed in the homeless shelter.

Meanwhile, I wish the academics would lay off some of the stress about race because to me it seems that what it is





about is people have a natural tribal mentality and... well, look at the Mayans... in Chiapas, they wear look-a-like blouses and skirts. So then outsiders come around and the

tribe bristles. I've heard people (white people from USA... white buffer class people) who help people in Chiapas say that Mayans are welcoming. Yes, okay, they needed help. But I'd like to be a fly on the wall after these visitors left. What do the Mayan people say in private? I bet they laugh at their funny clothes and weird ways.

Okay, so then the power guys find that dividing people is a must. So they work to divide people thru class and race, kind of natural fault lines. They DO NOT use their huge resources to bring neighborliness to the populace. And so it goes.





Some of the academics say they are anti-white but they don't mean skin color. They say they mean POWER but I don't believe them.

I argued with one well-known academic that my baby died because I was poor (still am, though now I have a little land) and the hospital wouldn't let us in. The academic said he knew a black woman who lost TWO. My homeless friend lived in his truck. Academic said, if my friend were black, cops would torment him. But cops tormented Frank. He finally died of fumes later on, but I wondered while the ace and I were arguing why there was an impulse with him and other aces to play the game of Comparative Suffering. Why not solidarity?

For me, I am just mad at Mother Nature or "God" or





whoever, whatever because LIFE SUCKS. Humans are just fancy monkeys all across the board. I have no faith in there ever being a fix. But I do however like to see the pot

stirred in the witch's den with a few Mega-Systems boiling away in it. Anarchy gives the anarchist dignity. Nothing else. Systems change, then a certain awful shape reappears like a face in the rippling water.

Jeez, I gotta go make breakfast for the dogs and the man.

To ANARCHY and Dignity!

Carolyn







**DERRICK
JENSEN**





SB: You've made it clear in your work that you feel we live in the most destructive culture ever to exist. What about western civilization is so damaging? Who are the winners and losers in this culture? Who benefits and who suffers?

Derrick Jensen: I think when you are systematically dismantling the ecological infrastructure of the planet, nobody really wins. I think that there are some fiscal winners, certainly those at the center of empire, but it depends on how you define who wins. Certainly everybody loses. This is true on the most intimate familial level. 25% of all women in our culture are raped in their lifetime; another 19% fend off rape attempts. Do the perpetrators of those rapes "win"? It depends on your definition. When people have this entire system based on exploitation, within their



own perceptual worldview, yes they are winning, but in terms of entering into a relationship, or even just surviving given the rates of cancer, nobody wins.

...then with so few, or really nobody benefiting from the way we live, how does this culture sustain itself?

One of the ways the culture perpetuates itself is that we've all been so traumatized that we forget what it's like to be in mutual, functioning relationships with each other and with the natural world. So we've changed what it means to be in a relationship and we've divorced ourselves from the land. Judith Herman defines something called complex post-traumatic stress disorder. If you've been traumatized once, you might have PTSD, and that might be why you have flashbacks to a specific trauma. Judith Herman asks



what happens if you are raised, or kept for years in captivity? Or raised in domestic violence, a family system where you are consistently terrorized? One thing that happens is that you feel the need to control your surroundings because everything is so scary. You can't open up to entering into fully mutual relationships, you don't even believe they are possible. So, part of the way the culture perpetuates itself is by traumatizing more and more people and making people terrified of relating to their surroundings in an open and loving way.

Could you then compare this way of living and this trauma to another, non-destructive way of living?

Well, we know that prior to contact with civilization, the Okanagans had no word in their language for child abuse.





They did have a word for violation of a woman and what that word literally means is “someone looked at me in a way I don’t like.” This isn’t a romantic notion of noble savages or anything. This is both contemporary anthropology and explorers early accounts of running into Indians. Not just Indians but indigenous people everywhere. When Columbus first got to the so-called new world, he wrote some wonderful bits about how peaceful and happy the people here were, how when he handed them swords they grabbed the wrong end and cut themselves. The Indians of North America didn’t use rape as a tool of war until they were taught to do so by the whites. Not every indigenous culture has been peaceful, but many have, and if some have, that means we all can. Further, even the ones who were warlike, none of them invented napalm. None of them approached the





routine violence of this culture. It's a really startling and extraordinary thing.

I want to ask you about the latest drive to war. Is there a desperation evident in the latest war, or is the system functioning like it always has? Is it even possible or realistic to expect our culture to continue without war?

It doesn't seem to me like there is going to be a war. Because a war, to my mind, implies both sides actually fighting. Is it going to be a massacre? Yes. But that's what this culture specializes in. This culture is based on a rigidly defined but rarely articulated hierarchy in which violence from those higher on the hierarchy to those lower is most often either transparent or fully rationalized. Violence from





those lower on the hierarchy to those higher is met with shock, horror, and the fetishization of the victim. That's true on the personal level where within my family my father would beat people in my family with impunity but the one time my brother fought back he got beaten worse than ever. And it's true on the social level where people get arrested for assaulting a police officer whenever they are beaten by cops. On the other hand, 4-6 Americans die every day because they encounter police. The police are the most violent gang in the country, and yet that's not noticeable. These days, Bush and company are talking about the need to assassinate Saddam Hussein, but if any head of state of any other country in the world said that about Bush, that country would be invaded within 48 hours. So it's going to be a slaughter. This is what the culture is based on; this has been it from the beginning. Civilization originates in





conquest abroad and repression at home. I don't see any desperation in this, I don't think it's any different than Nazi Germany invading Czechoslovakia or Poland, or the United States invading, take your pick...

...500 years of invasions...

Yeah. I don't see it as much different. It's the same old story, and once sufficient numbers of brown people are dead and their resources have been taken over, then we can get back to important things like the NCAA tournament. I think Bush is a bit more stupid than most, and that manifests in his rhetoric being a bit more direct than most. Clinton continued to bomb Iraq, but he spoke of people's pain as he committed the atrocities. Bush reminds me quite a lot of Stalin- just direct force.





But how does the culture continue to justify destroying sacred sites? How can we pull down thousand-year old trees? What are the justifications for these everyday atrocities?

Well, its justifications are all over the map and they pretty much boil down to production being the god of the culture. Production is more important than anything. Whether it's justifications for building a telescope on Mt. Graham, whether it's justifications for clearcutting, justifications for killing bison, it doesn't matter, there will be as many justifications as there are places. The fact that the justifications are stupid and patently untrue doesn't matter. For example, the whole spotted owl vs. jobs was a myth. Throughout the 80's, the cuts went up, but the jobs went down because of automation and raw log exports. Or Remedy (a tree-sitter in the ancient





redwoods of Northern California), being pulled out of the tree. The loggers have said that when they cut the tree it's going to shatter, so they're going to kill this tree not even to serve production. They're going to get fucking zero out of this. And it doesn't matter because the culture is driven by a death urge. The culture wants to destroy everything. Given its way, it won't stop until there's nothing left on the planet. But the planet won't let that happen. The justifications are all over the map; they're not even internally consistent, they're all lies.

Talk to us about hope. Do you have hope?

No. I have no hope.

Why is that?





I ask people all over the country if they believe the culture is going to undergo a voluntary transformation to a sustainable way of living and nobody says yes. Nobody. One of the smartest things the Nazis did was to co-op rationality, that is to co-op hope. They did that by making the Jews believe every step of the way that they had something to lose. Would you rather get an ID card or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Would you rather go to a ghetto or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Would you rather get on a cattle car or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Would you rather take a shower or would you rather resist and possibly get killed? Hope is one of the things that binds us to the system, especially false hopes. If we just ask nicely enough, Weyerhaeuser will stop deforesting. If we just get out on the streets and march, those in power will finally, this one time, listen and do what we say. If we just





speaking truth to power that will do good. We have a deal with those in power we can speak our truth to them, and then they listen to us, and then they ignore us. And then we all feel good because we've done something about it. We stood up and said what we believe. Well, big fucking deal. Did it save any salmon? I don't think so. We environmentalists talk about the earth being a sentient being, but we don't give it any credit for being smart. I read 1984 a little while ago and Orwell says if you want to see the future, picture a boot stamping on a human face forever. I think Orwell was brilliant, but he had no ecological understanding. The dominant culture won't be brought down. It won't cut back. It will get worse and worse. The intrusiveness will get closer and closer to the heart of every person. How much closer can it get? But it will. And the damage to the natural world will get worse. The only thing that will stop it is ecological





collapse. I'm not saying by this that we should do no work. I have absolutely no patience for the people who have to hide from how hopeless it is to continue. Fuck that. That's nonsense. If I say I don't have any hope, people's response to that is why don't you kill yourself? My response to that is life is really good, life is wonderful. I'm standing outside right now, and yesterday was the first day of the year that the digger bees, the solitary bees had come out. Yesterday was the first day of the year I saw a bumblebee. I just learned the other day that I have neighbors I didn't know about, they're called mountain beavers. It's pretty cool. I'm a complex enough being that I can hold in my heart that life is really good, and we are really, really fucked. I don't need to say it's one or the other. The other thing that people say is "if things are so bad, why don't you quit?" That used to bother





me until I realized what it's about. That question reveals an incapacity to love. Because if you're in love, you do what's right, you put your life out there to protect the ones you love. If you're not willing to do that, you're not worth shit. This guy wrote me a while back and told me he has a son of great heart and he wants his son to remain an activist. He wants to teach his son hope, but he doesn't want to lie to him because he doesn't have any hope himself. I wrote back and said don't teach your son hope, teach him love. If he has love...

...he's going to do it regardless...

Right. And once you give up on the dominant culture, give up on voluntary transformation, your hopes begin to change. My hope is that red-legged frogs survive until the





culture comes down. My hope is that coho salmon survive, no, I don't have hope that coho salmon survive because hope implies some sort of magical thing out there, because unless they want to go extinct, I will not allow the dominant culture to drive coho salmon to go extinct. That's not going to happen. There's a difference between hope and making it happen. So you don't have false hope. But that doesn't prevent you from fighting, because you have that love.

So where do you fight? Are there weak spots? Are there cracks in the empire? Are there places that you think are most effective? When you want to save the salmon, what do you do?

I think the truth is very simple, but we just don't talk about





it, because we're too scared. The entire civilizational infrastructure needs to go. I mean this on the psychological level. All my Indian friends say the first thing we need to do is decolonize our minds. To recognize that progress is another word for destruction. That production really equals the conversion of the living to the dead. That globalization is really about genocide. That's the first thing. As a writer, that's mainly where I go. But most of us stop there. There's a great line from Lucy Parsons, whose husband was murdered by the state as one of the Haymarket martyrs, who said "never be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth." The thing I'm really interested in is figuring out how we can deprive the enslavers of the ability to enslave. I'm writing a book on that right now and I don't have an answer because I haven't gotten there yet.





I don't think there's a single answer. Like I said, we're not going to stop it but we can push at the right time and help the natural world out. The natural world is really smart, and it knows the only way to get rid of this horrible culture is to take the salmon away, to change the climate, and do all these other things that are going to make the culture fall. But I'm absolutely not saying that we should sit back and let environmental degradation happen or further it ourselves...

...and it seems that the natural world does fight back with mother bears charging freight trains to defend her cubs, rampaging elephants escaping from the circus, and the like.

The natural world has been way too patient.





To finish up, I want to ask you a question that you asked Native American author Vine Deloria, Jr. in an interview in Green Anarchy #11. It reads simply, "what are some better ways of perceiving and living in the world?"

Some kid asked me on the east coast when I was on tour, a ninth grader, I believe, she said "Have you ever been in love?" I said "Every day!" It's a wonderful thing to fall in love with the place that you live. And to fall in love with these particular trees, these particular bees, these particular tadpoles. It's a wonderful thing. To pay attention to your neighbors, to get to know them, and to allow them to get to know you, not in any scientific sense where you go out and catch them, but instead on their own terms. We're all slaves now; one of the reasons we don't take down the system is





because we're afraid of the consequences. I work in a super maximum security prison and I know what life is like for the people in there. I know what the dominant culture does to those who really resist. It's really scary. At the end of my life, I want to be able to say I did everything I could and I gave everything I had. That with every cell in my body I opposed this system. We need to bring this thing down. We need to stop it. That's another better way to be. Because we're in a hell of a fix.







KIRKPATRICK SALE





Dear Kirk,

All of our stories have beginnings and ends. You may choose your mythical start- the big bang, the garden of eden, the golden age- but not your finish. Industrial civilization is our shared story now and it too will end. You can see it in the physical form- practically no stone has been left unturned in the search for resources to feed it. Contaminants have spread to the furthest corners of the globe. Fish- the last remaining staple wild food- are too toxic to eat regularly. What's left of wild nature is everywhere cornered. Plundered or preserved for a tourist attraction, the integrity of ecosystems is compromised either way. A serious stall, if not outright breakdown, of industrial civilization seems likely soon. Is this wishful thinking, or do you agree? Are there clear signs that point in this direction?





Capitalism has always moved from crisis to crisis. It even has a peculiar way of turning its own calamities into profits. Far worse than a collapse would be the continuation of this system forever. Forever encroaching on the diminishing areas of unconquered territory, both within ourselves and without, like taking the square root of an infinitesimally smaller number that can never quite get to zero. Millenealists don't see this point- that an unacceptable present may not come to an acceptable end. This is why we struggle against the conditions of life that we find unacceptable right now. You wrote of the Luddites, who launched an impressive but mostly unsuccessful resistance against the industrialization of England. Have you seen more recent examples of rebellion or movement that inspire you? Anything that measures up to the severity of the problems we are facing?





I'm curious about your thoughts on biophilia, which you wrote of in *Adbusters* #57. You wrote that despite the fact that "western civilization has eclipsed nature... the fact is that nature is not gone from our souls, no matter how much capitalist civilization has distorted it and dismantled it or driven it from our daily sensibilities." Certainly this much is true, even hardcore city dwellers have at least an appreciation for the wild or natural, or better yet may have had a transcendent moment of feeling connection to all living things. But if this is true, why have we done so much to go against our supposed inner human nature? Almost no one wants to see a clear cut or an oil spill, but there they are. Where did we go wrong? Is it even worth speculating?

-Sam





Dear Sam

About two years ago, at a dinner party, I started to name my perception of the world "collapsism," long before I knew that a few others in anarchistic circles had used the word. It was simply a label for a belief, a prediction, I had made in 1995 (and published in *Wired*) that the world would collapse around 2020 A.D., with a congeries of crises that would begin around 2008 and would be fatal to western civilization, and possibly to mammalian life on earth, by that date. Among the crises- caused, as I needn't explain, by humankind's sense of rightful domination of the earth, a sickness ratified and overwhelmingly magnified by science and capitalism- would be the extinction of vital species and the destruction of their ecosystems, continuing expansion of the ozone hole, severe climate change and increased global





warming, causing the melting of the Antarctic ice sheets and rise in ocean levels by 100 feet or more, depletion and pollution of edible fisheries, erosion of topsoils and collapse of worldwide agribusiness, diminution of potable water and edible foods, introduction of new diseases and spread of increasingly virulent old diseases, internal warfare everywhere of the poor against the rich, and external warfare of nations fighting over scarce resources (probably including nuclear weapons). For starters.

This is not stuff i'm dreaming up. It's all well known, confirmed by a Pentagon study in 2004 and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2005, among others. These things are happening in many places already, and there





is no sign that there is anyone capable of stopping them. Capitalism and its political satraps rule the world and inherent in that system is the exploitation of the world's resources for human benefit, even if ultimately humans will not benefit. (Think of the word "exploit"- in our perverse language it means a good deed.) Jared Diamond's book *Collapse* says that failed societies did not change, even when they saw disaster looming, because they continued to believe in the things that once made them successful; a perfect description of capitalist society, and especially the American version of it. Hence: collapse by 2020 if not before.

It should be obvious that I do not see any signs that the forces aware of this catastrophe, and working in various ways to spread the alarm and attempt to change the course, can be successful. We continue to do what we can, because





it is a moral imperative- hence I have just written a book called *After Eden: The Evolution of Human Domination* to show how we got into this mess way back in the Stone Age, and how we could get out- but we do not do so with any sense of hope. Hope is for the churches, pie in the sky, by and by, not for serious folk.

I am also working to spread the idea of separatism and secession, with the idea that maybe we can destroy the American empire from within and build small self sufficient states that can have some measure of sanity and resiliency in the midst of the coming catastrophes. But I do so without thinking that this is going to take on in very many places soon enough to avert disaster, though I do have a lingering feeling that if anything will get through the turmoil of collapse it would be small, self-sufficient, ecologically





minded entities devoted to the restoration and protection of Gaea.

Still, you realize that though I found the Luddites admirable, I made the title of my book *Rebels Against the Future*, with the clear sense that I knew their protest would be futile. And as a neo-Luddite, I have the same understanding of my cause.

"Where did we go wrong" is exactly the question of the center of my new book. I find it at about 70,000 years ago when, in order to survive a calamitous turn in the earth's climate, humans in southern Africa took to hunting large animals and eventually made hunting the centerpiece of their lives, a culture that spread to all parts of the earth over the millennia. Hunting may seem bold and brave and natural, but the consequence was to separate humans from nature





in a way that had never happened before, to make animals the Other, the Enemy, to make humans preoccupied with the task of exploitation and, crucially, killing, day after day. This eventually led to the creation of religion and as an adjunct to hunting, and art, as hunting magic, and hierarchy, as a means of organizing the hunt. And, ultimately, it was an attitude, an ideology, that led to the domestication of plants and animals and agriculture, the pinnacle of human domination. And still more ultimately to industrialism and present day dominion over all.

There is an important point in understanding this: that this separation from, and dominion over, nature is not innate within us, part of our human nature. For before that time of 70,000 years ago, particularly as Homo Erectus, we lived in a fused harmony with other creatures and forces of nature.





There was scavenging of food, plant and animal, but no hunting, no killing. No Other, no Enemy. This way of life went on for nearly 2 million years, and that is what is ingrained in our soul, that is who we really were before we took this fateful turn, that is what is in us today. It is not a question of going back, because that can't be done, but of releasing the deep self within us, regaining a new perspective on how to live with nature.

If there is any salvation for us, it will come with the development of a new ancient consciousness, re-understanding our place within nature and seeing nature as sacred in and of itself. Gaea again. It would mean abandoning Western Civilization, of course, but better than than having it collapse around us and taking us down with it. It would mean a great reduction in population, a





reordering of society to tribal, village, and bioregional levels, an economy of self-sufficiency and cooperation and sharing and egalitarian genders, and a liberation of our true souls. I can't say i expect it to happen, but it is of some value that this is certainly possible as well as certainly desirable. and the only thing that will prevent collapse- and, provided that any humans survive the collapse, the only way of life by which we could continue on earth.

-Kirk





Dear Kirk-

Got your letter. Thanks for the reply. I have a few questions and responses if you have time.

It's hard to read a prediction of collapse, especially one with a date attached. Many, myself included, will have a hard time believing that a drastic change will come that is completely out of our control, that industrialism will fail just as it has completed its triumph over every corner of the world. But nowadays people are used to controlled environments, in personal and public spaces. When things really go to shit, Americans will still be demanding that somebody (else, that is) do something about it. Industrial collapse will be a horror film that you can't turn off, that doesn't end.





As you noted, the jury is no longer out on the science of collapse. A three-part *New Yorker* series on global warming details the observed and predicted effects of human caused climate change. This article suggests an essentially unlivable planet by 2100, 80 years behind your prediction. Many other sources, from governmental to journalistic to scientific, point to similarly dire conclusions.

To me, the dates and facts of any future collapse are unimportant. You need only look at what we've lost so far (or what we've managed to "achieve") to know this way of life is untenable and should be abandoned, that we have long since past the point when something must be done.





As for the question of when humans began their march to total domination of nature, I'm surprised you pinpointed hunting. I don't see any evidence that hunting leads to hierarchy and domestication. Many of the most egalitarian extant societies are hunters and gatherers. Elephant hunting pygmies of central africa (a hunt that requires considerable skill and coordination amongst the hunters) kept their small band egalitarian societies intact even after hundreds of years of continual contact with nearby farming and herding tribes. Those more civilized tribes had religion, hierarchy, oppressive gender roles, and domestication, all of which they tried to impart on the Pygmies but by and large failed. Hunting is the way many animals eat, and killing is a part of that. When done right, it pushes the predator and prey together, not apart. Although some hunters did go on to





create the mess we are in today, most did not, and many still refuse the civilized way.

I'm beginning to think that "where did we go wrong?" is a bad question. I've asked it quite a few times before, but I believe it has no easy answer or maybe no answer at all. Some people lived peacefully in nature, some people invented the atomic bomb. Are we even all from the same planet? How can you say what consciousness humanity has in its soul? Or what "human nature" is? The most elemental facts of human history defy belief and reason. Nevertheless, in asking these questions of the past perhaps we'll find not answers but possibilities for the future.

-Sam





Sam,

What can I say? I've spent three years writing a book on the evolution of human domination that proves conclusively that it was when Sapiens began hunting, sometime in the 70,000 year ago range, that they began "modern" culture and began to live in nature in a completely new way. It is not long before there is evidence of art and symbolic thinking, allowing the creation of the concept of Self and Other that is at the heart of hunting, and ultimately of warfare (though that doesn't show up until 15,000 years ago or so). After that, the creation of jewelry and decoration, another celebration of the self, and by 28,000 one site shows jewelry in such profusion on three figures that it is clear they are the favored of the tribe, hence hierarchy, and this is increasingly





common. Cave art is another means of distancing and manipulating nature, used for the hunt.

As to contemporary hunter-gatherers, they come in many different kinds, and most are not especially peaceful. Those that are, like the Mbuti, say, are those that never made hunting a central part of their lives or else maybe reigned in hunting after it had led to widespread exterminations, as in North America, where hence in recent times you have tribes so respectful of the prey that they say prayers to it and apologize after the kill.

You think about it: something happens to the human soul in killing- killing anything, but especially large fellow





mammals whose suffering and agony cannot but tear at the heart and gut. To allow that, and to compensate for that, we developed many methods of denial and displacement for the removal of guilt, all of which served to separate human from the rest of nature and thus justify domination.

The book will be published by Duke University Press, probably late next year.

Best,

Kirk





