

How green is *Green Anarchy*?

Ellen Carryout

Both the Spring & Summer 2002 editions of *Green Anarchy* were read and studied for this review. GA is available for \$2.00 contact P.O. Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440.

To join the green of ecology with the black of anarchy is to make transparent something intuitively apparent. To genuinely critique the state and authority is to critique civilization and industrial devastation. The first anarchists—the indigenous gatherers who lived in what Marshall Sahlins dubbed “the original leisure society”—were certainly green anarchists. The theses that create projects like *Green Anarchy* (GA) are important ones.

But as David Watson’s article “Swamp Fever” shows [FE #350, Fall, 1997], this common intuitive ground does not necessarily make allies of all who gravitate to the anarcho-primitivist or green anarchist tag. Watson explains, “Calling oneself a primitivist, or pretending that the origins of the authoritarian plague can be ultimately explained, helps little ... A movement which attempts to reduce primitive insights into an ideology or strategy risks becoming a caricature of its own best instincts.”

Unfortunately, the green anarchism espoused by the Eugene-based collective that publishes *Green Anarchy* has not only reduced primitive insights into a political program, it is a confused agenda fraught with problems. While I must say I have more in common with these green anarchists than with most liberal environmentalists, my disagreements with this ‘zine are as strong as my sympathies.

Proud to align itself with eco-feminist and queer-anarchist perspectives, the GA collective nonetheless chose as its front page story for Spring Ted Kaczynski’s “Hit Where It Hurts.” In this ugly essay, the ex-Unabomber calls sexism, racism, homophobia, sweatshops, and the like “non-essential” issues. He dubs those of us who support what he characterizes as victim-based liberation causes as nothing more than “pink reformers.” It’s really disgusting that anarchists would provide prominence to the prose of such a thug. What’s next? Front page raps by Eminem?

The fact that Ted is doing time in the slammer for killing people in his once secret war against the technological system has made him a folk hero among the green anarchist set. In the collective’s disclaimer following “Hit Where It Hurts,” they question his racist and heterosexist tendencies but make clear that they admire him as a “sharp strategic thinker” and “wholeheartedly support” him as “an anarchist political prisoner.”

In the same Spring publication, the GA editors decided to print an excerpt of Ward Churchill’s response to 9/11 called “‘Some People Push Back’: On the Justice of Roosting Chickens.” At first glance, this visceral and vindictive vendetta has a certain appeal. However, I distrust Ward Churchill when he ridicules American peace activists and ultimately defends the attacks against the World Trade Center as a form of “reality therapy” and “medicinal” justice. Churchill’s charges against the empire are hardly unfounded, but the tone of his ideological assaults leave me unsettled.

The summer version of *Green Anarchy* contains nothing as patently offensive as the aforementioned articles by Kaczynski or Churchill. In fact, I was very pleased to see “Sex Among the Zombies,” a reprint from Arthur Evans’ amazing 1978 work *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*. As Evans shows the connections between sexual repression and industrial domination, he also suggests that the earthy ecology we wish to defend includes an inherently erotic energy.

Despite the brightness brought by the excerpt from Evans' classic, the GA journal remains more preoccupied with trashing other anarchists who the editors believe are too philosophical, intellectual, fashionable, or "gradualist." No, as for tactics, the GA collective explicitly prefers what they call "focused, thoughtful acts of revolutionary violence" to "principled arguments" or education.

That is, it appears that GA wants do as other so-called revolutionaries have done in the past: impose their ideas on others through violence rather than win minds through persuasion and debate. Rather than embrace the contagious nature of desire or trust the intelligence of other humans, we should assume that the brainwashed masses need the GA vanguard to show us the way to the promised land. I would find such self-righteous arrogance deeply troubling even if its proponents didn't claim to back up such bad-ass, authoritarian rhetoric with rifles and bombs.

This summer, folks affiliated with GA took their ideas on tour with punk shows and film festivals to raise money for political prisoners. The tour's planners firmly stated before beginning that their "time is running out" for unrestricted "aboveground" activism and that they saw this tour as a sort of "last stand." At least one right-wing "eco-terrorism expert" agreed about the seriousness of GA's threat to civilization and asked the FBI to investigate the tour. However, the FBI publicly declared its support of the rights of the GA tour to travel, perform, and express their ideas, "no matter what their message or their purpose." At least for the record, the FBI does not see the GA crew as posing much of a revolutionary threat with thrashy tunes and radical flicks. Are the GA people guilty of paranoid self-importance? Or are they not paranoid enough?

The editors of *Green Anarchy* do not hesitate to express their affinity with all that's wild, but despite their best intentions, too much of this publication has been domesticated by ideology and self-righteousness. The way of the wolf is not the way of the hunter. To embrace the gauntlet of a doomsday battle is to become the machine we oppose. To follow the gun on this journal's cover is to propose as necessary a very predictable, impractical, and suicidal solution.

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See response in Letters, FE #359, Winter, 2002–2003.

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