Anarchist Studies 23.1 © 2015 ISSN 0967 3393
www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/anarchiststudies/

Pacifism, Violence and Aesthetics: George Woodcock's Anarchist Sojourn, 1940-1950[1]

Mark Antliff

(For Ken Allen)

'Art is antithetical to violence' – so claimed George Woodcock (1912-1995) in his opening editorial for the first edition of the literary journal *Now*, which he edited from late March 1940 to fall 1947.[2] In the third issue of *Now* (Fall, 1940) Woodcock lent nuance to this declaration by announcing his principled opposition to military service, stating that recruitment into the army in wartime Britain was 'incompatible with my whole conception of morality and service to mankind, and entirely opposed to the function of the artist'.[3] Shortly after this statement appeared Woodcock went before a government tribunal and received conscientious objector status, but unlike his close friend the poet and Christian anarchist Derek. S. Savage (who was granted an unconditional exemption) Woodcock was required to join the War Agricultural Committee (WAC) and work the land.[4]

As he later recounted, from its inception *Now* staked out an 'anarchist-pacifist' position, and although such ideological allegiances did not govern Woodcock's editorial policy during the journal's first seven issues (1940-41), when the second series (1943-47) appeared in 1943, he stated unequivocally that 'the volumes of *Now* will be edited from an anarchist point of view'.[5] That this orientation continued to encompass anarchist-pacifism was made clear in Woodcock's repeated meditations on the theme of violence and aesthetics, not only in *Now* but in a series of anarchist booklets and related publications that appeared up to his emigration to Canada in April 1949.

In this essay I will examine Woodcock's correlation of art and anarchism with pacifism by addressing three interrelated themes that preoccupied him throughout the 1940's: the artist's role in society, the ethics of the anarchist artist, and the relation of art and anarchism to violence. Woodcock's views on these subjects evolved over time, and in some key instances – such as the function of violence in revolutionary change – they remained nebulous for an extended period. I will also examine the role

of the visual arts in Woodcock's thinking, to account for his enthusiasm for the Polish expatriate artist, Jankel Adler, his endorsement of the aesthetic theories of Derek Savage, Alex Comfort and Herbert Read and his interactions with the Surrealists. I would argue that the reproduction in *Now*'s second series of works of such diverse artists as the anti-war cartoonist John Olday (No.1), the Surrealists Valentine Penrose (No 3) and André Masson (No. 7), the Neo-Romantic abstractionist Stanley Jackson (No. 4) and most importantly, the Expressionist Jankel Adler (No. 6), all testify to Woodcock's attempt find a visual corollary to his anarchist ideals.

By considering George Woodcock's evolving theory of art in tandem with his developing anarchism I hope to shed new light on the role of *Now* as a laboratory for politicised aesthetics during the 1940's. As I will demonstrate, by the time he left England in 1949, Woodcock had developed a unique theory of anarchist art and creativity that had an enduring impact on his thinking about culture.

WOODCOCK'S ANARCHIST NETWORKS FROM PACIFISTS TO THE FREEDOM PRESS

Woodcock's first sustained exposure to anarchist pacifist circles came at age twenty eight (in the spring of 1940) through his burgeoning friendship with fellow poet and critic Derek S. Savage. It was through Savage that Woodcock first became familiar with the anarchist literary doctrine of 'personalism' and that movement's leading light, Henry Miller.[6] When Woodcock began corresponding with Savage in April 1940, the latter was the European editor for the American anarchist-pacifist journal *The Phoenix* (1938-1940) as well as an organizer for the Peace Pledge Union (PPU). That April Savage had distributed the first issue of *Now* at a PPU meeting in Cambridge and over the course of 1940 Savage attempted to lure Woodcock to join him in the village of Dry Drayton, Cambridgeshire where he hoped they would establish 'some kind of community on the land' made up of people 'united in opposition to war' who would farm for sustenance, run a printing press, and constitute 'an absolute community in possessions and money'.[7]

Between the appearance of *Now No 3* in autumn 1940, and *Now No. 4* in spring 1941, Woodcock had in fact experimented in just this manner by joining an eclectic community of 'anarchists, left-wing socialists, secular minded pacifists' and 'Quakers' founded by the pacifist and Peace Pledge Union stalwart John Middleton Murry in Langham, Essex.[8] Those ties were reinforced that spring when Woodcock moved *Now* to Cambridge and Alex Comfort became a regular contributor to the journal. Comfort later recollected that he was won over to anarchism shortly after joining *Now*'s editorial board in April 1941.[9]

Woodcock recounted that his views were further 'clarified' when he met Herbert Read in the summer of 1941. That fall or winter Read introduced Woodcock to 'the group of young intellectuals running Freedom Press', including the charismatic anar-

chist Marie Louise Berneri 'who completed my conversion and recognized that in saving *Now* the anarchist might make impressions on the literary community'.[10]

Now had ceased publication in 1942 when Woodcock abandoned his WAC service and became itinerant; with Berneri's backing he was able to revive the journal in 1943. Berneri, together with fellow militants Tom Brown, Albert Meltzer, and Vernon Richards had launched the journal *War Commentary* (1939-1950) as an organ of the Freedom Press following the outbreak of war in September 1939, and concurrently they helped form the Anarchist Federation to bring together disparate anarchist groups across Britain and Scotland. When the first edition of the new series of *Now* appeared in early 1943 it was published under the auspices of Freedom Press but as Woodcock later recounted 'the anarcho-syndicalists connected with Freedom Press objected that avant-garde poetry and literary criticism had nothing to do with the workers' struggle'[11] These advocates of 'revolutionary purism' led by anarchists Albert Meltzer and Tom Brown instituted a compromise that continued until the journal's demise in 1947. After the first edition of the new series Woodcock became the actual publisher while the Freedom Press served as distributer and allowed him to use their address, first at 27 Belsize Road and then 27 Red Lion Street. [12]

Meltzer, who became an intractable opponent of Woodcock, recalled in his memoirs that the Anarchist Federation 'as then constituted was anarcho-syndicalist and endeavoured to exclude pacifists, supporters of the war, and non-syndicalists', on the basis that anarchism 'was a fighting creed with a programme for breaking down repression' as opposed to 'a marble effigy of utopian ideals, to be admired and defined and even lived up to by some chosen individuals within the frame work of a repressive society'. According to Meltzer, Woodcock held the latter view, but even worse, was purportedly a 'careerist [who] wanted to use Read's influence and the movement's assets to build his own literary clique by means of a magazine (*Now*)'.[13] Despite such resistance, beginning in 1941, Woodcock became a regular contributor to *War Commentary* and he published a series of polemical texts under the auspices of Freedom Press outlining his anarchist-informed reflections on such diverse topics as agriculture (*New Life to the Land*, 1942), the railway system (*Railways and Society*, 1943), housing and urbanism (*Homes or Hovels: the housing Problem and its Solution*, 1944), the history of anarchism (*Anarchy or Chaos*, 1944), anarchist ethics (*Anarchism and Morality*, 1945), and communitarian ideology (*The Basis of Communal Living*, 1947).[14]

ART AND SYNDICALISM

The intractable divide posited by Meltzer between the 'fighting creed' of bona-fide anarchist syndicalists united in a collective struggle, and individualist pacifists and their allies in the arts, was a binary opposition Woodcock set out to refute in his Freedom Press polemics and related writings. From 1941 onward Woodcock joined his

War Commentary colleagues in promoting syndicalist organisation as the key means by which society could be changed, but he additionally sought to define a place and role for art and creativity within this syndicalist matrix. Concurrently he worked to disentangle syndicalist theory and praxis from anarchist modes of violence and armed conflict that figures like Meltzer continued to value. In *Anarchy or Chaos* Woodcock cast the anarchists' endorsement of syndicalism after 1900 as part and parcel of a rejection of 'propaganda by the deed' wherein individual anarchists carried out 'terrorist acts' against 'the figureheads of tyranny'.[15] Woodcock dismissed 'the ineffectiveness' of such 'terrorism' and lauded the anarchists' alternative strategy of turning 'the new syndicates into effective instruments for the social revolution'.[16]

'Syndicalism', we are told, 'favours a change in society, not through parliamentary means or a political revolution which would merely change one government for another, but by the direct economic action of the workers, expressed in methods of boycott, sabotage, ca'canny, the strike, and above all the general strike, and aiming at the true revolution and the abolition of property and the state'. Syndicalists 'hold that workers should be organized according to industry', that 'each industry should form a single syndicate', and that syndicates would be joined together by means of 'a federal organisation, in which local units are autonomous and carry out actions without reference to any central executive authority'.[17] This new form of organization, free from any 'centralist and authoritarian structure', is proclaimed by Woodcock to be 'the one social method by which the free, classless society can be attained, and the evils of government be abolished forever'.[18]

Woodcock declared culture and the arts to be central to such freedom. In the final chapter of *Anarchy or Chaos* and related articles on Restoration England (*Now* 1943) and 'The Artist and the Future' (1947), Woodcock argued that history 'shows that the development of corporate and individual achievements of men is strongest and assumes its most significant forms in periods and places where political organization is weakened and least centralized'.[19] Thus 'the vitality of human culture appears to run in inverse proportion to the strength of the state' for when 'authority is held firmly by an efficient centralized government [the] free action of the individual is impeded' both 'in the development of organic institutions and the cultural achievements of individual artists and scientists'.[20] Following Kropotkin, Woodcock held that the late Middle Ages, when artisanal guilds thrived in 'almost independent walled cities', constituted one such era of decentralization. These medieval guilds produced 'the greatest architectural style the world has yet seen', namely the Gothic cathedral. Other such eras included 'the Italy of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo', when the Italian peninsula was split among tiny principalities and republics', and England under the Restoration, when the intelligentsia possessed 'an element of personal anarchism' in their attitude toward a weak central government.[21]

Similarly creativity also thrived when political instability reigned supreme –

thus Paris only became 'the artistic capital of the world' when the French state was subject to 'three revolutions'.[22] Woodcock concludes that, in an anarchist society where all members have equal access to economic security, free education, and are unencumbered by 'restrictive law or custom', 'the number of artists produced will be proportionately higher'. The art they create would in turn be an expression of the organic order of anarchism itself, 'for art, like all forms of life and activities of life, is a continuous though changing organic whole'. 'The art of free society will have its roots in the cultures of the past' and 'this living body of art will survive and grow, but the superficial excrescences of fashion and convention will be purged away as men grow towards balance and completeness'.[23] In *Homes or Hovels* Woodcock adapted this thesis to a post-revolutionary vision of community development wherein building syndicates would work in consort with the future occupants of homes to enact 'improvements in design' and 'test the practical value of new ideas in architecture'. In contrast to imperious figures like 'Le Corbusier' who sought to dictate building design for the masses, anarchists reportedly realise 'that men are endlessly diverse in their tastes' and that 'a free society must increase this diversity'.

Thus architecture in an anarchist community will not consist of the standardized, rectilinear structures lauded by Le Corbusier, but instead of 'a great variety of forms' expressive of the diversity underlying all organic development.[24] In sum Woodcock concluded that syndicalism, art and creativity were integral to the natural order that would flourish once an anarchist society took root. The artist's role therefore is to resist serving the State 'which negates the value of art' in order to pursue 'his vocation of portraying the truth as he sees it'. 'From such seeds', Woodcock proclaims, 'will grow the tree of freedom'. [25] Thus, *pace* Meltzer, Woodcock described individual creative expression and syndicalism as existing in harmony, not in conflict, as mutually constituent parts of an organic, anarchist order.

REFUTING THE MYTH OF REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

Having integrated art and creativity into the syndicalist matrix, Woodcock was still faced with the challenge of addressing the role of armed struggle in the contemporary anarchist-syndicalist movement. In an appendix to *Anarchy or Chaos* affirming his allegiance to the Anarchist Federation, Woodcock reproduced the 'Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism adopted by the International Congress of Revolutionary Syndicalists at Berlin in December 1922', which openly contradicted any association between syndicalism and non-violence. That document declared anarchists to be the enemies of 'all forms of organized violence in the hands of any government', but nevertheless sanctioned 'violence [as] a means of defense against the methods of violence of the ruling classes'.[26] As Meltzer later noted, it was this very declaration in favour of armed resistance that the Anarchist Federation in Great Britain adopted as its official

platform.[27] As a conscientious objector and self-declared pacifist Woodcock must have found this endorsement of violent revolution extremely problematic and in his wartime writings he repeatedly glossed over the issue by laying stress on strike action rather than armed conflict as the principle means of achieving revolution.[28]

His most explicit statement in this regard appeared in a November 1943 letter to the editor of *Horizon* in which he acknowledged 'that Durruti and Ascaso would not have lain down under Hitler', adding that 'anarchists in this country propose no such inaction'. But he then asserted that anarchists also 'deny that Nazism can be defeated by military means which include the very evils they pretend to attack, or by workers supporting one side in the factional fights of their enemies, the ruling classes of all lands'.[29] In effect Woodcock followed Meltzer and the Anarchist Federation in rejecting the participation of workers in State-sponsored warfare; what he left out of the equation was any clear response to figures like Durruti and the organisation of armed resistance on the part of anarchists themselves.

This same conundrum complicated Woodcock's description of the syndicalist movement during the Spanish civil war. Citing 'the concrete example of the land workers' collectives in Spain' in *New Life to the Land* (1942) as proof that his proposals for the reorganization of agriculture 'are not based on theory merely', he then noted that 'in July 1936, at the commencement of the Spanish Civil War, revolutionary action was taken by the peasants', who carried out 'large scale expropriations of land', especially in 'Catalonia and the part of Aragon which Durruti's columns liberated in the early months of war'.[30] Here Woodcock fails to critically address the role of Durruti's armed troops in clearing the way for such peasant expropriations, or the role of violence in the expropriations themselves.

Woodcock's response to this dilemma was twofold: firstly, to refute the anarchist-syndicalist theory of armed conflict as itself potentially authoritarian and secondly, to redefine violence as part and parcel of the natural order and therefore as something constructive rather than merely destructive. To achieve this Woodcock pitted the French ideologue Georges Sorel whose infamous *Reflections on Violence* (1908) showcased the myth of the general strike as a catalyst for an armed worker's revolt,[31] against none other than Mikhail Bakunin, whose notion of violence Woodcock characterized as a positive force in a December 1944 *Now* essay titled 'The Destructive Urge' (which differs dramatically from his later appraisals of Bakunin).[32] This critique ultimately led him back to his pacifist roots and to an assertion of the primacy of the individual rather than syndicalist revolution as the catalyst for social transformation. In the pages of *Now* it was artists such as Jankel Adler who served as exemplars for this yet to be realized anarchist order.

Woodcock's critique of Sorel had its origins in his response to the posthumous publication of Simone Weil's 'Reflections on War' in the February 1945 issue of Dwight Macdonald's anarchist-leaning journal *Politics*.[33] In that text Weil condemned

revolutionary armed struggle as a means that – through its very organizational apparatus – mirrored the hierarchical, centralised and authoritarian order it aspired to overthrow. Weil utilized this thesis to counteract the conviction still operative among leftists 'that a revolutionary war, defensive or offensive, is not only a legitimate form but one of the most glorious forms of the struggle of the toiling masses against their oppressors'. As a case study Weil deconstructed what she called the 'legendary belief' in the mobilization of French citizens to defend the French Republic against a European coalition in 1793, which contemporary socialists cast as 'a spontaneous outburst of the masses aroused against their oppressors'.

Weil demonstrated that the execution of this war only resulted in the oppression of liberty at home, for the war forced France's revolutionary leaders 'to leave on paper the Constitution of 1793, to forge a centralized State apparatus, to conduct a murderous terror which they could not even turn against the rich, to annihilate all liberty – in a word, to smooth the road for the bourgeois, bureaucratic and military despotism of Napoleon'.[34] She then went on to chart the same paradigm with reference to the Russian Revolution and subsequent Civil War, concluding that 'every apparatus of oppression, once constituted, remains such until it is shattered' and that 'every war that places the weight of a military apparatus over the masses, forced to serve in its maneuvers, must be considered a factor of reaction, even though it may be directed by revolutionists'. [35]As Weil concludes 'whether the mask is labeled fascism, democracy, or dictatorship of the proletariat', the real adversary is 'The Apparatus – the bureaucracy, the police, the military'. [36]

Weil's thesis proved compelling to Woodcock who in a 1946 article meditating on 'the vexed question of anarchist violence' argued that 'the influence of non-violent ideas on anarchists is increasing' and that 'those who cling to ideas of violence do so largely through a romantic attachment to the revolutionary traditions of the nineteenth century' – a clear allusion to Weil's critique.[37] In his important essay on 'The Folly of 'Revolutionary' Violence', published in *Aldelphi* in 1947, Woodcock directed his readers to Weil's essay and programmatically applied her thesis to other historical struggles such as the French Commune and the Spanish Civil War to show how what began as an armed conflict executed in a 'libertarian manner' became 'steadily more authoritarian in its conduct' as groups of volunteers, free of an hierarchical structure, were inevitably replaced 'by efficient military units with strict discipline and inequality of status'. Woodcock concludes that the principles of anarchism in matters of concrete organization are ill suited to military conflict, with the result that 'the violent revolutionary in civil war' must either accept defeat or 'adopt the military practices of his adversaries, and so jettison the libertarian and egalitarian ideals for which he fights'. [38]

He also applied this thesis to the issue of anarchist ethics, concluding that violent conflict not only serves to objectify the adversary but to dehumanize both participants in the confrontation. Citing the case of Georges Sorel, whose *Reflections on Violence*

argued that the general strike should be marshaled as a mythic catalyst for the fomentation of a war between classes, Woodcock concluded that 'propaganda based on class violence, as elaborated in its most extreme form by Sorel, inevitably results in a coarsening of moral fibre, a growing unscrupulousness in dealings with other people'.[39]

Woodcock argues that such coarsening and objectification of others, runs counter to feelings of empathy and mutualism that he declares to be integral to the human condition and, as such, the building blocks for an anarchist order and its social correlate, mutual aid. Thus the revolution called for by anarchists can only occur through 'the use of non-violent means' and its origins reside in the ethical precepts shaping our individual behavior toward others. Woodcock then set out to historicise this thesis by pointing to revolutionary moments when non-violence was the principle vehicle for social and political transformation. Woodcock notes that in the initial phase of Adolphe Thiers' military campaign against the French Commune, 'soldiers started to fraternise with the Parisians' which caused Thiers to evacuate 'his army from the whole of Paris as the only means of preventing it from becoming completely demoralized by friendship'. Thiers then embarked on a propaganda campaign in Paris and Versailles to stoke hostility on both sides and provoke the Communards into resisting his troops by military means, a strategy that proved successful and thus ushered in the defeat of the Commune by a superior military force.[40] Similarly, the Russian Revolution in its 'decisive phase... was a non-violent moral victory, based on an appeal to human brotherhood'. By contrast when violence – both insurrectional and military – was introduced into the equation under the Bolsheviks this spirit of brotherhood was destroyed and there occurred 'the final erection of a tyranny more formidable than that of the tzar'.[41] Woodcock went even further by claiming that 'people in general tend to be pacific in their demonstrations' as witnessed by the non-violence that characterized the English General Strike of 1926. In a veiled critique of Sorel, Woodcock concluded that 'most of the significant outbursts of revolutionary violence have been carried out by minorities of organized doctrinaires who forced a violent reaction on the movement of people'. Coercion, rather than voluntary cooperation typified such military-style campaigns. 'Thus, far from revolutionary violence being inevitable, it is usually engineered by interested groups'.[42]

In a related essay on 'The Functions of Political Myth' Woodcock returned to this theme, charting the cynical use of abstract, generalized myths by leaders and elite cadres from across the ideological spectrum to make a calibrated appeal to human emotions and aspirations.[43] Woodcock singled out the myth of the general strike formulated in Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* as exemplary of such cynical manipulation, for Sorel's vision of a catastrophic conflict was presented to the workers in such a way as to appeal to 'the irrational elements of the human mind' and in so doing to provoke immediate action rather than considered reflection.[44]

Woodcock acknowledged that Sorel 'may have been sincere in his revolutionary

desires' but that his theory of myths quickly became a tool of authoritarian cliques such as the Bolsheviks and Italian Fascists who drew on his theory in manipulating the masses. Woodcock therefore called on anarchists not to structure 'human life and relationships' in response to nebulous, abstract myths, but in response to 'the factual details of production and every day intercourse'. On this basis he concluded that an appeal to 'rationality' rather than 'irrationalism' is 'much more likely to lead to increased freedom and wellbeing than any political myth'. Similarly, it is 'co-operative action' rather than conflict 'which would provide a much more reliable force towards real social revolution than the most formidable and seductive myth'.[45] Individual behavior should be grounded in interpersonal interactions. In short Woodcock calls on anarchists to renounce the politics of myth-making as antithetical to anarchism itself. For Woodcock the irrational appeal of political myths and the acts of violence they provoke are diametrically opposed to the ethical, fraternal, and rational precepts that define the free individual and the natural order of anarchism.

ANARCHIST MORALITY AND THE MAGNANIMOUS ARTIST

As a corollary to his critique of revolutionary violence and myth-making, Woodcock increasingly grounded the prospects for social transformation in the ability to voluntarily modify individual behavior in response to anarchist precepts. A key text in this anarchist gambit was Woodcock's Freedom Press booklet, *Anarchism and Morality*, published in October 1945 shortly after the close of the Second World War.[46] Woodcock's manifesto addressed the pressing need to define a new morality that would nurture rather than inhibit 'human freedom', which he identified as the essence of anarchism. 'The sole criterion of morality' therefore should be 'whether our actions impede or promote the freedom and happiness of others' and 'whether one's actions are harmful to other men'.[47] Anarchist morality, Woodcock asserts, is intrinsically pacifist, since it 'signifies the manner or customs by which men can live virtuously and peacefully in society', and it 'springs from and has relation to the intercourse of individuals and it can be manifest only in such intercourse'. The moral compass of anarchism will serve as the means by which anti-social behavior on the part of individuals will be modified.[48] This grounding of morality in 'the personal contact of individuals' was antithetical to ethical notions based on 'some supernatural theology' or 'some mythic collective entity like the state, the nation, or race'.[49] Adherence to these latter abstractions resulted in the violence and catastrophe of the Second World War; anarchist morality by contrast would inaugurate a new era of peace and universal harmony.

In a section of the booklet on *A Morality of Free Men*, Woodcock argues that this ethical attitude has its basis in Kropotkin's concept of mutual aid which 'is in accordance with the nature of man'. 'The natural tendency for men, as for animals, to cooperate for their mutual advantage' spontaneously 'promotes a respect for

their equal rights to happiness and development'; this in turn 'prompts us to those actions of mutual aid that are necessary for the healthy life of society'. Such behavior 'demands no restriction of our freedom but it asks us to respect the freedom and benefit of others'. Most importantly, this harmony with others is expressive of a harmony within the self – a kind of inner peace that has its interpersonal correlate in social peace. Thus Woodcock quotes approvingly from Kropotkin's posthumous book *Ethics, Origin and Development* (1924) to the effect that 'one must live without inner conflicts, with a whole life, in harmony with oneself, and must feel that one lives independently, and not in enslavement to external influences'.[50] This inner peace is supplemented by a form of natural justice, defined by Woodcock's other hero William Godwin, as 'an inward system of judgment', which takes 'an idea of the good of all men in society' as the basis for individual action.[51]

In Woodcock's narrative these principles of mutual aid and natural justice also instigate an increased capacity for sympathy and magnanimity. Citing Kropotkin's *Anarchist Morality* (1897), Woodcock argues that, with the development of human consciousness, there has arisen 'the element of sympathy, by which we try to put ourselves in the place of another person and thus understand his needs and sufferings'.[52] The greater an individual's capacity for such sympathy, 'the more intense and delicate will your moral sensibility be'. These natural qualities find their fullest expression in magnanimity, that is, the ability of individuals 'to give their efforts freely in whatever way they have chosen to help humanity and to go beyond what justice might demand of them in their relations with other men'. Magnanimity enables us to extend anarchist morality beyond our interaction with specific individuals to encompass the good of humanity as such. The 'quality of magnanimity', states Woodcock, has often manifest itself in the lives of 'exceptional individuals who have given their efforts freely in various ways as revolutionaries, as artists, as scientists, that men in general may enjoy fuller and more ample lives'.[53] In this manner Woodcock unequivocally ascribed a revolutionary role to aesthetics.

THE TAO OF CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

To achieve this elevated state, we as individuals must embark on a concerted effort to transform our consciousness, and with it, our relations with others. This encoding of violence as a mode of inward-directed, self-transformation was first showcased in Woodcock's December 1944 *Now* editorial on 'The Destructive Urge', profiling Michael Bakunin's theory of revolution. Citing Bakunin's 1842 declaration that we should put 'our trust in the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates' because it is 'the eternally creative source of all life', Woodcock concludes that Bakunin's polemic was a vitalist call to embrace the universal law of change, rather than an appeal for 'senseless chaos and negative destruction'. Such change does not entail destruction

of matter 'in some absolute sense', but rather the transformation 'from one form to another'. In human society this process is manifest whenever societal structures inhibit the free development of the natural order, by which Woodcock means the ethical values and societal relations expressive of anarchism. For instance, 'only the destruction of the concept itself of government' will allow for 'a society based on the realities of change' that will 'grow organically and freely as any other living thing that follows the dialectical course of nature'.[54]

The question therefore arises, how does one go about destroying such inhibitory structures? Rather than positing armed revolution as an agent for change, Woodcock calls for a radical purging *within* the individual psyche of those thought processes and concepts that compromise our autonomy, inhibit our freedom and creativity, and distort our behaviour towards others. 'People must be taught to think in such a way, that even the abstract idea of authority can no longer influence them to seek or willingly submit to power'; moreover, 'our struggle is with ideas primarily, because we realize that the ultimate roots of social evils are in the minds of men'.

It is an individual rejection of submission to power and the desire for power itself that Woodcock celebrates as the source for revolutionary change. 'Thus the destructive urge by which anarchism is impelled' sweeps away the old order 'by destroying within men the willingness to submit', and with it 'the means by which tyranny can be built over them'. Ultimately one must develop one's inner 'Tao' to achieve this revolution: 'we have no desire for the destruction that manifests itself in battlefields and bombed cities'; instead 'we wish to see a society based, like external nature, on the processes of organic change, in which man also will be able to change and grow, each developing within him his own Tao, his own way to personal fulfillment'.[55] By 1946 Woodcock was confident enough to publically proclaim anarchism to be 'the logical end of pacifist thought' in a synthetic article outlining his views, published in the *Peace Pledge Union Journal*.[56]

Thus Taoism, rather than the Christianity of Derek Savage, or Alex Comfort's neo-romantic meditations on the psychology of death,[57] is at the nodal point of Woodcock's version of anarchist personalism. Woodcock's knowledge of the major progenitors of Taoism, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, came from two sources: the thought of Herbert Read and the writings of Oscar Wilde.[58] In his anarchist critique of 'The Cult of Leadership' published in the 1943 edition of *Now*, Read called on individuals to reject authority figures and to act responsibly in relation to their peers by following the tenets of Lao Tzu. According to Read, 'the great Chinese sage' formulated 'three rules of political wisdom, which required (1) abstention from aggressive war and capital punishment, (2) absolute simplicity of living, and (3) refusal to assert active authority'.[59] This formula echoes Woodcock's Taoist call for a renunciation of the submission to power and the desire for power. Read may have also encouraged Woodcock to consult Oscar Wilde's ode to Taoism in his *Soul of Man under Socialism*

(1891), a text long-celebrated within the anarchist movement as an apologia for radical individualism.[60]

From 1946 to 1948 Woodcock embarked on a prolonged study of Wilde's writings, which resulted in his annotated edition of Wilde's *Soul of Man under Socialism* in 1948, and the publication of his monograph, *The Paradox of Oscar Wilde* in 1950 (the latter text included *The Soul of Man under Socialism* as an appendix).[61] In his monograph, Woodcock noted that Wilde 'read the Taoist philosophers with great interest', and he argued that Wilde modeled his own 'philosophy of living' after Taoist Chuang Tzu's 'idea of 'the perfect man'. Wilde, in emulating Chuang Tzu, reportedly practiced 'non-interference' in his relations towards others because he shared the Taoist philosopher's belief that we should not inhibit each other's freedom and that 'a desirable state of society can only come naturally from within men'.[62] Woodcock notes that Chuang Tzu's condemnation of government, of capital, and the accumulation of property are all enthusiastically endorsed by Wilde in his 1890 review of the Taoist philosopher's writings and in *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, which appeared the following year.[63] He concludes that it was the influence of Taoism that accounts for the 'anarchistic and anti-capitalist ideas' coursing through Wilde's 1891 manifesto. [64]

JANKEL ADLER

Of the artists illustrated in *Now* it is the Polish expatriate Jankel Adler (1895-1949) whom Woodcock singled out for special praise in his only venture into art criticism in the journal.[65] In the sixth edition of *Now*'s new series, published in 1946, Woodcock described Adler as among the very few 'who stand apart as free men', a characterization clearly meant to ascribe anarchist credentials to the artist. Adler, who had first risen to prominence among the leftist avant-garde in Weimar Germany, lived in France and Poland following Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

In 1940 while residing in France he joined the Polish army in exile and received training as a gunner. After the battle of Dunkirk in May-June 1940, Adler was evacuated with his Polish colleagues to Glasgow, where he was decommissioned on grounds of ill health.[66] In 1943 he moved to London where he quickly established himself among literary and artistic circles that included the Neo-Romantic and 'Apocalypse' poets George Barker and Dylan Thomas, as well as the artists Robert Colquhoun, Michael Aryton and Keith Vaughan.[67] That same year Adler befriended Herbert Read, who wrote a short preface for a solo exhibition of Adler's work at the Redfern Gallery, and he began frequenting the circle of anarchists affiliated with the Freedom Group, including Marie Louise Berneri and Vernon Richards.[68] It was through these connections that Adler evidently befriended Woodcock. When Adler died prematurely in 1949, Herbert Read penned a eulogy

to the artist in *Freedom* that stands as testimony to exactly why George Woodcock held Adler in such high regard:

> He was devoted to the great Chinese teachers—Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. In social theory he acknowledged Proudhon, Tolstoy and Kropotkin, but I do not know with what relative degree of enthusiasm. But he was proud to call himself an anarchist – he was convinced that anarchism is the only philosophy compatible with the creative spirit of the artist.[69]

In Jankel Adler, George Woodcock found his ideal – an individual who had purged his soul of coercive abstractions and a desire for power by nurturing his inner Tao. The qualities of sympathy and magnanimity Woodcock identified with anarchist pacifism were central to Adler's art, which frequently dwelled on the human suffering wrought by war and the empathy between individuals that enabled them to transcend their pain and rediscover their humanity. From 1942 onward Adler painted a series of poignant, figural works, such as *Orphans* (1942), *Two Rabbis* (1942), and *Destruction* (1943), all registering his reaction to the anguish caused by the war. The full significance of Woodcock's 1946 meditation on Adler's achievement can best be appreciated when paired with his monumental work *The Mutilated*, painted in London in 1942-43 (Fig. 1).[70]

Fig. 1. Jankel Adler, *The Mutilated*, 1942-43. Oil on canvas, 86.3 x 111.7 cm. Tate Britain. © Estate of Jankel Adler; Artist Rights Society/DASC, 2015.

Significantly Woodcock describes Adler's art as a manifestation of Bakunin's anarchist vision:

> Adler destroys the world around him. But his destruction is a revelation. More than this he is a destroyer who builds up. Tearing apart a world of false relations, he reduces it to the elements of thought and vision, to the fundamental images and shapes, and then rebuilds it into its own truth. Like Proudhon, he has for the motto of his art, '*Destruo et aedificabo*' [I destroy in order to build]. In his paintings we see form reaching its true relations through the hand of a man who is free within – a thinker who has broken away from the false unities of class, country and creed into the real and human unity that lives within us all.[71]

Jankel Adler's art is an expression of the destructive urge of anarchism, created by an individual who has successfully freed his consciousness of the false abstractions of class, country and religion, to grasp his own Tao. In *The Mutilated* Adler portrays two broken bodies in close, intimate proximity to each other and to us as beholders – indeed they almost burst out of the frame of the painting. [72] Set against a bleak landscape reduced to fields of unmodulated, matte red, grey and pale blue, the crippled figures themselves have a sculptural quality, their forms delineated by thick black, gestural lines, with the bodies painted in myriad brown and white tones, applied in opaque layers using brushes and a palette knife to create a scrapped and scumbled effect. Such methods, which approximate the *frottage* techniques of Max Ernst, are another sign of Adler's individualism: as Woodcock notes, his technique 'is boldly experimental, carrying into the work of his brush and knife a three dimensional element that suggests the building up and cutting away into sculptural relief and adds the virtues of its varying planes of light to the resources of colour and surface form'.[73] The two wounded males twist their bodies in a cumbersome greeting that speaks of the pain their gestures seek to overcome. Our close proximity to them invites us to join in this mute conversation, to share in their suffering and their humanity. Their lack of identity as to class, creed or country speaks to the magnanimity that is Adler's message: they could be wounded soldiers or their civilian victims, whether German, French, Russian, Italian, Polish, British, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Jewish. First and foremost they represent all of us.

WOODCOCK AMONG THE PERSONALISTS

In addition to developing his own unique contribution to anarchist aesthetics, Woodcock simultaneously used *Now* to promote those thinkers and movements he judged conducive to his anarchist vision. Foremost among them were the personalist theories of Derek Savage and Alex Comfort, both of whom Woodcock partially

endorsed despite Savage's and Comfort's disagreements with each other. Such issues revolved around the relative merits of Neo-Romanticism as an aesthetic vehicle for anarchist individualism.

In his review of Savage's 1944 manifesto, *The Personal Principle*, in *Now No 3* Woodcock took up the latter theme by aligning Savage's concept of the personality and the artist's 'symbolic responsibility' as a 'transmitter of individual values' to 'the anarchist ideal of a society functioning for the benefit of individuals'. In this regard he quotes Savage's claim that 'the subordination of the exterior structure [of society] to the centrality of the individual person' is absolutely essential if artists are to be integrated into society.[74] What he left out of this review was Savage's blistering critique of Herbert Read's 1936 polemic identifying surrealism with the liberating, individualist impulse of romanticism, and his related condemnation of classicism as the counterpart to authoritarianism in society and politics.[75]

In Savage's estimation, Read's characterisation of the romantic-classical conflict which pitted the individual against society, is a chimera, for 'the primary, organic principle' that defines our personality is 'completely prior to any romantic-classic division'. Ideally in the great artist, romantic and classical elements existed 'in perfect harmony', in 'equilibrium'; it was only 'when personality became divided, personal and social values separated and divided from themselves that there developed on the one hand a conventional classicism and, in reaction to that, on the other, an individualistic romanticism'. [76] Thus Savage saw the rise of neo-romanticism and surrealism in England as the artistic response to a society out of equilibrium, rather than as an expression of the organic principle integral to anarchism.[77]

Such views stood in stark contrast to those of Alex Comfort, who actively embraced Read's concept of romanticism as the literary counterpoint to his version of anarchist individualism. In *Now No 2* (1944) Woodcock published Comfort's seminal essay, 'Art and Social Responsibility'[78] in which Comfort grounded his anarchist individualism in our awareness of our own mortality. According to Comfort, those able to accept death are few, for the vast majority of us find 'the emotional realisation of death intolerable'.[79] Individuals who fully acknowledge their impending mortality take personal responsibility for their actions, whereas those in denial renounce such individual responsibility and place their faith in 'an immortal invisible and only wise society, which can exact responsibilities and demand allegiances'.[80] Comfort identifies this collective belief in immortal abstractions such as the state as a form of pathology that enables people to commit unspeakable crimes against their brothers and sisters. In times of war this denunciation of individual responsibility is taken to an extreme, as individuals engage in wanton destruction on behalf of such spurious abstractions as racial identity, democracy, fascism, communism or religion. As Comfort concludes, 'men who participate in corporate action which involves the abrogation of personality -who are members of any society to which they attribute quasi-human properties and

admit obligations, are, while so participating, madmen'.[81] Their sane counterparts are, de-facto, anarchists who renounce such abstractions.[82]

The role of the anarchist artist, in a pathological society committed to war, is to embrace his individual mortality, to reject collective abstractions, and bears witness to his own sanity by means of his art. 'The essence of art is the act of standing aside from society', and since 'creative activity' in such circumstances speaks on behalf of those whose mortality is threatened by the State, that art will necessarily be romantic. Referring to Read, Comfort asserts that 'the essence of romanticism is the acceptance of a sense of tragedy', which for Comfort entails an acceptance of one's own mortality and that of others.[83] What this amounts to is an art based on those qualities Woodcock identifies with sympathy, magnanimity and mutual aid. Comfort writes that 'it is only through the vicarious activity of creation that the great multitude ever finds a voice', for the anarchist artist 'speaks on behalf of utterly voiceless people: of the politically oppressed, of innumerable victims of society and circumstance ... and because they have understood the supreme indignity, on behalf of the dead'.[84]

When Comfort published an expanded version of this essay in book form in 1946, he eulogized Pieter Breughel, The Elder as a proto-romantic, illustrating his *Triumph of Death* (Fig. 2) (1562-63) and *Massacre of the Innocents* (1565-67) as representative of the 'struggle against those men and institutions who ally themselves with Death against humanity' and 'with Death's ally, irresponsibility'.[85]

Fig. 2. Pieter Breughel, *The Triumph of Death*, 1562-63.
Oil on panel, 117 x 162 cm. Museo de Prado

Comfort claimed that Breughel's two paintings represent a 'disintegrating society' whose 'irresponsibility he hates', concluding that the true subject of these 'masterpieces' is 'the romantic struggle of Man against his environmental enemies'.[86] For Woodcock the anarchist equivalent to such responsible magnanimity resided in Adler's *The Mutilated* (Fig. 1), but it also found expression in the work of Stanley Jackson whose abstract series of drawings titled *Patterns of Frustration* were reproduced in a 1944 edition of *Now* (*No. 4*).

Employing abstract forms reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch and the art of contemporary Surrealists such as Conroy Maddox, Gordon Onslow Ford, Matta and Miro,[87] Jackson's four drawings follow the internal evolution of a psyche from a state of *Awareness* (Fig. 3)--with its nightmare landscape of blasted trees and biomorphic forms caught in barbed wire-- to *Phase of Introspection*, to an *Exquisite Moment of Scintillation* and finally to *Ultimate Despair*.

Fig.3. Stanley Jackson, *Awareness*, reproduced in *Now: New Series, No. 4* (1944), n.p

The amorphous space and tortured organisms in *Awareness* and *Exquisite Moment of Scintillation* bear a strong resemblance to the molecular imagery and spatial disorientation created by Roberto Matta in works such as *The Vertigo of Eros* (1944) (which directly referenced Freud's association of Eros with vertigo).[88] In the accompanying commentary published in *Now*, Jackson is identified as 'a Romantic in outlook for

he sees man as a victim of his environment, and has no faith in the political panaceas which glib-tongued orators espouse so convincingly and with such a cost to mankind'. Jackson, who had previously worked in an academic style, had embraced abstraction in order to deal 'with subjects society prefers to ignore—death, frustration, the hopelessness of individual life, and the pointlessness of accepting the current situation'. *Patterns of Frustration* is then identified as 'one of the clearest statements of the evolution of the individual in society' and, by implication, it is a form of personalist protest indebted to the thought of Herbert Read and Alex Comfort. [89]

FREE UNIONS AND THE FREEDOM GROUP

Another group tentatively endorsed by Woodcock were the artists and anarchists affiliated with the Freedom Press who contributed to writer Simon Watson-Taylor's surrealist journal *Free Unions Libres* (1946). Watson-Taylor recalled being won over to anarchism in January 1941 after he befriended Marie Louis Berneri and *War Commentary* cartoonist Philip Sansom. This circle was part of a larger grouping affiliated with Roland Penrose, Conroy Maddox and the Belgian E.L.T. Mesens, who's London Gallery was a mainstay of the surrealist movement in wartime Britain.[90] *Free Unions* had been originally slated to go to press in December 1944, but as Watson-Taylor later recalled its appearance was delayed when Scotland Yard invaded his home hoping to find his friend John Olday, and promptly confiscated 'the mass of typescripts, photos and art work' that were to make up the journal.[91] When *Free Unions* finally appeared in the summer of 1946 it was with the aid of Sansom and Berneri who assisted with the layout and typography.[92] Woodcock later recalled that he 'would sometimes go with the Italian anarchist Marie Louise Berneri to the meetings of this group, which took place in the public bar of a large gin palace at the south end of Tottenham Court Road'.[93]

Around the same time the anarchist John Olday – whose anti-war illustrations appeared in *War Commentary* and in *Now* – became a close ally of Watson-Taylor.[94] Olday and Sansom both contributed to *Free Unions:* Sansom with a surrealist drawing titled *War, War* (Fig. 4), and Olday with a poetic ode to anarchism in which night itself is transformed into a female personification of erotic desire whose hair 'blooms' into the 'black flag' of anarchism at the poem's conclusion.[95]

Sansom's drawing is of a monstrous warrior with a Janus-faced death head and ape-like visage, a bishop's miter, grotesquely swollen breasts, a gun with testicles, a hairy leg with cloven hoof paired with a clothed leg with spurred jack boot, and four gesturing arms with oversized hands. In yet another anti-clerical, anti-statist gesture, Watson-Taylor reproduced an excerpt of the anarchist François-Claudius Ravachol's blasphemous declaration condemning private property and priests as he went to the scaffold on July 11, 1892 (*Free Unions*, 28).[96]

Fig. 4. Philip Samson, *War,War*, reproduced in *Free Unions Libres* (1946), 11.

Writing from prison to Watson-Taylor in August 1945, Olday affirmed the support among anarchists for the *Free Unions* project, declaring that 'the friends of *Now* are bound to support it'.[97] *Free Unions* opening editorial -likely penned by Watson Taylor and Mesens[98]- left no doubt as to the group's anarchist orientation. The statement declared that their unity had 'arisen freely' as an expression of their belief in 'the absolute freedom of the individual' and their realization that 'self-immolation in any mass organism, from whatever motives, entails the immediate atrophy and death of that individuality'. The editorial then called for a turn to surrealist methods, such as 'psychic automatism' as 'the means by which liberty may ultimately be attained'.[99]

Woodcock recounted in 1950 that his interest in surrealism stemmed from the fact that the movement as manifest in Britain had 'completely shed its former Marxist tendency and turned in an anarchist direction' over the course of the Second World

War.[100] This transformation was part of a larger trend that James Gifford has identified as 'post-surrealist', wherein anarchist writers melded surrealist technique with 'an anarchist ordering of unconscious impulses' expressive of libertarian values.[101] Sansom and Olday's surrealist-inspired meditations on war and anarchism certainly constituted such a re-ordering. This new orientation among Anglo-American writers and critics emerged shortly after the first surrealist exhibition in London in 1936 as a challenge to the French Surrealist *doyen* André Breton, who still clung to his marxist allegiances despite his break with the Communist Party in 1934-35. Thus on the advent of the Second World War Breton was arguably caught up in a rearguard action to retain authority over the surrealist movement in the face of an up swell of anarchist militancy generated by a group of writers and artists seeking to subsume surrealist techniques within an anti-marxist ideological matrix.

In 1938 Breton set out to synthesize marxism and anarchism by forging an alliance with Léon Trotsky and founding the *Fédération international de l'art révolutionaire indépendent* (FIARI), but the project dissolved following Breton's move to New York in 1941.[102] Breton and Trotsky's July 1938 manifesto 'Towards a Free Revolutionary Art' struck an unwieldy balance between state socialism and anarchism, claiming that, while 'a socialist regime of centralized planning' was still necessary, 'for intellectual creation it must from the start establish and assure an anarchist regime of individual liberty'.[103] While Breton's ideological position remained ambiguous during the Second World War, following the war's conclusion he championed the libertarian socialism of Charles Fourier, attempted to revive the uneasy alliance between State socialism and anarchism exemplified by the FIARI platform, and then gravitated towards anarchism, which culminated in his formal alliance between 1951 and 1953 with the French anarchist journal *Le Libertaire*.[104] Thus the surrealist-anarchist rapprochement forged in *Free Unions*' predated Breton's own anarchist allegiances, and should instead be interpreted in light of the 'post-surrealist' turn initiated within Anglo-American circles on the eve of the Second World War.

Free Unions endorsed an anarchist-individualist agenda not only by publishing the work of anarchists Sansom and Olday, but through surrealist Conroy Maddox's anti-clerical 'Notes on Christian Myth', which opened with Bakunin's famous statement, 'If God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him'.[105] Concurrently Woodcock worked in tandem with Watson-Taylor's group to promote this anarchist-surrealist alliance. *Now No 3* (1944) reproduced a surrealist collage by Valentine Penrose; Berneri reflected on the relation of sexual desire to anarchist notions on freedom in *Now No 5* (1945); and the journal's February-May 1947 edition contained Breton's declaration in favour of anarchism, 'The Colours of Liberty' (translated by Watson-Taylor), along with reproductions of a series of powerful drawings by André Masson provided by Mesens's London Gallery.[106] Three of Masson's drawings were surrealist-inspired mediations on the human carnage precipitated by the alliance

between the Catholic Church and Franco's fascist regime during the Spanish Civil War, thus affirming Bakunin's anarchist condemnation of god and the state. In his drawing *Never Satiated* (1936-39) (Fig. 5), Masson depicts a desiccated Franco flanked by an equally disfigured priest and a calf-headed officer, who, together with a bull-headed Moroccan mercenary soldier, are consuming human entrails amidst a wartime landscape littered with corpses.

Fig. 5. André Masson, *Never Satiated* (1936-1939), reproduced in *Now:New Series* (February-March, 1947), n.p.

As Robin Greeley has demonstrated, Masson's political caricatures were made during the Spanish Civil War at a time when he had reconciled with Breton and become a leader in the FIARI; moreover Masson's singular focus in these drawings on the Catholic Church, Franco, and European Fascism enabled a cross section of leftist journals—from the Christian Socialist *Le Voltigeur française* (1938-39) to the FIARI's *Clé* (1939)--to reproduce the drawings.[107] In his drawing *Tea at Franco's* (1936-39) Masson implicated Europe's democracies in the fascist cause by satirizing the role of the City of London in bankrolling Franco, even as the British government continued to officially endorse the Non-Intervention Pact of 1936 and Non-Intervention Committee (1936-39) set up to prevent war matériel and personnel from reaching Spain.[108] Since this latter drawing was so conducive *Now*'s disavowal of fascism, capitalism and democracy, its absence from the journal likely indicates that it was not a part of Mesens's London Gallery Collection.

Breton's statement, 'The Colours of Liberty', is of particular interest since it gives us insight into Breton's strategic positioning in 1947, when he was still seeking to

strike a balance between state socialism and anarchism. Significantly the article elides the difference between these two movements by eulogizing their alliance before 1914 in the name of anti-militarism, a theme central to Woodcock's own thinking. In a poetic flourish, Breton evoked his adolescent memory of mass rallies held at Pré-Saint-Gervais in Paris in March and May 1913, when on each occasion over a hundred thousand socialists and anarchists gathered to hear speakers from the French Socialist Party, the anarchist Confédération Générale du travail and Fédération Communiste Revolutionaire calling on workers throughout Europe to oppose a pan-European war.[109] Breton recalled the unfurling of a sea of red and black flags by fervent protesters opposed to State-sponsored warfare. The red 'tongues of flame' combined with the 'marvelous carbonized flower' of black were indicative of their shared passion for 'human liberty', and it was this fervent 'ardour' that Breton's wished to revive.[110]

Despite Breton's presence in the pages of *Now*, Woodcock remained skeptical of the French faction of the surrealist movement. He clarified his views in 1964 when he claimed that 'official surrealism' was a negligible force among the 'English individualists' for reasons directly related to his earlier anarchist theorizing and the personalist and 'post-surrealist' turn charted above. Woodcock argued that French surrealism proved appealing to English writers and artists only because it could be readily subsumed within the apriori framework of an indigenous romantic tradition, which had born fruit in the 'anti-systematic attitudes expressed in various anarchist and personalist doctrines'. Thus the surrealist impulse emanating from France was reshaped in response to this libertarian, individualist frame. By contrast the 'official surrealism' of 'the organized Parisian movement' was viewed by these English artists as 'over-systematic' and 'André Breton pontificating among the surrealists sounded to English individualists ears too much like Paul Moréas laying down the Parnassian law'.[111] In Woodcock's estimation, the hierarchical organization of the French surrealist movement--with its leadership cult and doctrinaire rules and regulations--contradicted the anarchist impulse native to Surrealist technique.

Woodcock's reticence also related to Breton and the surrealists' endorsement of sexual violence, as evidenced by the latter's celebration of the libertarian Marquis de Sade as an emblem of the unchained libido, tragically persecuted by the State.[112] Simultaneous with his 1947 declaration in *Now*, Breton and his colleagues had published a manifesto 'Rupture inaugurale' which paid tribute to the Marquis[113]; moreover the 1946 issue of *Free Union*s contained an excerpt from the Marquis de Sade's novella *La philosophie dans le boudoir, ouvrage posthume de l'auteur de Justine* (1795) wherein an innocent virgin Eugénie is transformed by a group of libertines into a violent heroine who rejects conventional codes of morality and sadistically tortures her own mother. The passage from *Justine* reproduced in *Free Unions* was of a political tract calling on all true Republicans to embrace the Marquis de Sade's concept of a 'free State' by rejecting Christian morals and customs in favour of unfettered sexual

freedom.[114] As Peter Marshall has noted the Marquis' anti-Clericalism, combined with his call for a minimum state, the abolition of capital punishment, and equality between the sexes were all conducive to libertarian precepts, but I would argue that his celebration of sadism as expressive of the laws of nature,[115] proved problematic for Woodcock and his colleagues. Any comparable endorsement of the Marquis de Sade was definitively rejected in the pages of *Now*: thus the same issue that included Breton's 'Colours of Liberty' contained Alex Comfort's powerful critique of sadistic impulses as antithetical to anarchism.[116] For Woodcock, Adler, Read and Comfort's aesthetics, with their firm grounding in anarchist ideology and ethics, proved more compelling than Breton's belated attempt to establish a *union libre* between surrealism and anarchism.

CONCLUSION: THE DESTRUCTIVE URGE

George Woodcock's anarchist sojourn in wartime and post-war Britain resulted in an argument for the centrality of art and creativity to the anarchist project and to the future order that would emerge with the creation of an anarchist society. The transformation itself would not take the form of a cataclysmic armed revolt against the capitalist state, but would instead be the product of incremental change among groups of liberated individuals whose behavior would prove inspirational to others. These revolutionary modes of living, modeled after anarchist precepts would necessarily lead to the creation of new institutions, and the eventual crumbling of the social edifice of state capitalism. Artists who shaped their creative impulse and their lives in response to anarchist ethics were both exemplars and agents of change in Woodcock's anarchist blueprint. Writing in Canada in 1976 at the age of sixty four, Woodcock left us with a definitive statement summarizing his anarchist philosophy that attests to this magnanimous vision and to his continued faith in the revolutionary import of art and creativity he had first articulated in the pages of *Now*:

> The practice of art is one of the modes of anarchist living, but anarchism is a projection into existence of the harmonies, and also of the dissonances that art reveals…In its continuing essentials, anarchism is a doctrine of liberty, but not a doctrine of nihilist license, since it recognizes that human existence, like all life, is subject to natural laws, to the ecological imperatives; it exists in the interface between freedom and necessity, just as art exists on the interface between impulse and form. Anarchists believe in the need to destroy, but only in the sense that, as Bakunin said in his famous aphorism, 'the urge to destroy is also a creative urge'. ('*Destruam et aedificabo'* as Proudhon somewhat differently – and previously – phrased the same continuing libertarian idea). But what they wish to destroy are the artificial and anti-creative structures of authority and coercion

> which are most emphatically represented in political laws and above all in the nation-state and which everywhere prevent the free development of natural generative impulses.[117]

Mark Antliff received his Ph.D. from Yale University and is author of *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (1993) and *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France, 1909-1939* (2007) as well as co-author of *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy* (with Matthew Affron, 1997), *Cubism and Culture* (with Patricia Leighten, 2001), and *A Cubism Reader: Documents and Criticism 1906-1914* (with Patricia Leighten, 2008). His research and teaching interests focus on art in Europe before 1945, with special attention to cultural politics in all its permutations, as well as the interrelation of art and philosophy.

NOTES

1 My thanks go to Allan Antliff and to Patricia Leighten for their valuable suggestions concerning the content of this essay.
2 George Woodcock, 'Introduction', *Now No. 1* (Easter, 1940), p1.
3 George Woodcock, ''Crouchy' Poets', *Now No. 2* (Fall 1940), p8.
4 Derek Savage, 'Crouchy Poets', *Now No.2* (Fall 1940), 7; George Fetherling, *The Gentle Anarchist: A Life of George Woodcock* (Subway Books: Vancouver, 2003), p20.
5 George Woodcock, 'Now: An Heir of the Thirties', 1-11 (typescript ms. dated 1974). George Woodcock Archive, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada.
6 See letters from D.S. Savage to George Woodcock, dated, 5 April, 15 April, 1940 in the George Woodcock Archive. For a succinct analysis of Henry Miller's Villa Seurat circle, and that group's relation to anarchist personalism see James Gifford, 'From Booster to Bolero: Post-Surrealism and Apocalyptic Anarchism', *Journal of Modernist Periodical Studies* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2013), pp270-292; for a more extended study, see James Gifford, *Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013), pp149-204. Gifford's analysis is indebted to Arthur Edward Symon's initial examination of the personalist-anarchist matrix. See the chapters on 'Personalism' and 'Libertarian and Romantic Parallels' in Arthur Edward Symon, *Poets of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), pp85-115.
7 D.S. Savage to George Woodcock, 22 May, 1940. George Woodcock Archive.
8 Woodcock, 'Now: An Heir of the Thirties', 6; Fetherling, *The Gentle Anarchist*, pp20-21, 31.
9 Woodcock, 'Now: An Heir of the Thirties', pp6-7; David Goodway, 'Introduction' ed. David Goodway, *Against Power and Death: The Anarchist Articles and Pamphlets of Alex Comfort* (London: Freedom Press, 1994), pp12-13.

10 Woodcock, 'Now: An Heir of the Thirties',pp8-9.
11 Woodcock, 'Now: An Heir of the Thirties', pp9-10.
12 Fetherling, *The Gentle Anarchist*, pp35-36.
13 Albert Meltzer, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels: Sixty Years of Commonplace Life and Anarchist Agitation* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1996),pp 87, 94-95, 104-05.
14 For a full list of Woodcock's Freedom Press publications, see Avan Avakumovic, 'A bibliography of the writings of George Woodcock (1936-1976)', in ed. William H New, *A Political Art: Essays and Images in Honour of George Woodcock* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), pp211-249.
15 George Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos* (London: Freedom Press, 1944); reprint with a new preface by George Woodcock (Willimantic Ct.: Lysander Spooner, 1992), p55.
16 Woodcock *Anarchy or Chaos*, 56. Woodcock's chapter on 'Anarcho-Syndicalism' in *Anarchy or Chaos* (57-64) first appeared in abbreviated form in an essay, 'The Development of Syndicalism', *War Commentary* (Mid-October, 1942), pp3-4.
17 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, 57-58; and 'The Development of Syndicalism', pp3-4.
18 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, p63.
19 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, 109 and George Woodcock, 'The Artist and the Future', *Jazz Forum* (Autumn, 1947), pp17-19; also see George Woodcock, *The Basis of Communal Living*,(London: Freedom Press, 1947), pp38-39.
20 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, p109.
21 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, pp110-112; also see George Woodcock, 'Restoration Culture', (*Now: New Series, No. 1* 1943), p61.
22 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, p110.
23 *Anarchy or Chaos*, pp113-14.
24 George Woodcock, *Homes or Hovels: The Housing Problem and its Solution* (London: Freedom Press, 1944), pp30-33. Woodcock undoubtedly was responding to Le Corbusier's manifesto on standardized housing, *Urbanisme*, translated by Frederick Etchells as, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1929).
25 Woodcock, 'The Artist and the Future', p21.
26 Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, p124
27 Meltzer, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels*, pp74-110
28 Woodcock reiterated his faith in the revolutionary potential of the general strike in numerous texts, including *New Life to the Land* (London: Freedom Press, 1942), 26-27; and his 1943 introduction to Peter Kropotkin, *The State: Its Historic Role* (London: Freedom Press, 1943), p7.
29 George Woodcock, 'Correspondence', *Horizon* (November 1943), pp356-362.
30 Woodcock, *New Life to the Land*, p27.
31 For a detailed analysis of Sorel's theory of revolution, see chapter 2 of Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France, 1909-*

1939 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), and Mark Antliff, 'Bad Anarchism: Aestheticized Mythmaking and the Legacy of George Sorel among the European Left', *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* No. 2 (2011), pp155-187.

32 George Woodcock, 'The Destructive Urge', *Now: New Series* No. 3 (December 1944), pp1-3. In his later interpretations of Bakunin, Woodcock used the same title for texts that characterized Bakunin's credo as more destructive than constructive, despite his repeated quotation of Bakunin's claim that 'the urge to destroy is also a creative urge'. This declaration is at the heart of Woodcock's positive interpretation of Bakunin in *Now*. See George Woodcock, 'Bakunin: The Destructive Urge', *History Today* (July 1961), pp469-478, reproduced in George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists* (Kingston, Ontario: Quarry Press, 1992), 160-176; and the chapter titled 'The Destructive Urge' in George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: Meridian Books, 1962), pp145-183.

33 Simone Weil, 'Reflections on War' *Politics* ((February 1945), pp51-55.

34 *Ibid*., pp51-53.

35 *Ibid*.,pp53-54.

36 *Ibid*., p55.

37 George Woodcock, 'Anarchy is the logical end of pacifist thought', *Peace Pledge Union Journal* (December 1946),pp7, 9.

38 George Woodcock, 'The Folly of 'Revolutionary' Violence', *Adelphi* (January-March, 1947), pp66-61; reproduced in *Anarchism and Anarchists*,pp92-103.

39 *Ibid*., pp92-93.

40 *Ibid*., pp98-99.

41 *Ibid*., pp99-100.

42 *Ibid*., pp101-102.

43 George Woodcock, The Functions of Political Myth', *University Observer* (Spring/ Summer, 1947), pp103-108; reproduced in George Woodcock, *The Writer and Politics: Essays* (London: Porcupine Press, 1948), pp28-41. Also see Woodcock's related critique 'Functions and Dangers of the political myth', *Freedom* (18 February, 4), 2, and *Freedom* (March, 1950),p2.

44 Woodcock, 'The Function of the Political Myth', pp106-108.

45 *Ibid*., p108.

46 George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Morality* (London: Freedom Press, October 1945).

47 *Ibid*., pp3-4.

48 *Ibid*. Following Kropotkin in his 1896 text *Anarchist Morality*, Woodcock acknowledges that anti-social behavior would inevitably arise in a future anarchist society, but that the communitarian ethics shaping all social interaction would serve as a corrective to any such tendency towards human conflict.

49 *Ibid*., p3.

50 *Ibid*., pp5-6.

51 *Ibid*., pp7-8.
52 *Ibid*., p9.
53 *Ibid*., p11.
54 Woodcock, 'The Destructive Urge', p2.
55 *Ibid*., p3.
56 Woodcock, 'Anarchy is the logical end of pacifist thought',p7, 9.
57 On Derek Savage, see Salmon, *Poets of the Apocalypse*, pp7-9, 85-88, 92-94, 98, 103, 126; and David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp140-46; on Comfort, see Arthur E. Salmon, *Alex Comfort* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), pp17-42; Carissa Honeywell, *A British Anarchist Tradition: Herbert Read, Alex Comfort and Colin Ward* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp80-102; Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*, pp238-59, and Goodway, 'Introduction', *Alex Comfort: Writings Against Power and Death*, pp7-30.
58 See Read's opening eulogy to Lao Tzu and his follower Chuang Tzu's renunciation of the concept of government in Herbert Read, *The Philosophy of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1940); for an overview of the impact of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu on Oscar Wilde with reference to his seminal anarchist manifesto *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891), see Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow*, pp62-92. On Lao Tzu and Doaism, see Peter Marshal, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), pp53-66, and John A Rapp, *Daoism and anarchism : critiques of state autonomy in ancient and modern China* (London: Continuum, 2012).
59 Herbert Read, 'The Cult of Leadership', *Now: New Series No. 1* (1943), pp9-19.
60 On Wilde, see Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow*, pp70-73;
61 George Woodcock, *The Paradox of Oscar Wilde* (London: Macmillan, 1949); reprinted as *Oscar Wilde: The Double Image* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989); and Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, introduction and notes by George Woodcock (London: Porcupine Press, 1948).
62 Woodcock, *Oscar Wilde*, pp85-87.
63 *Ibid*., pp150-52, 308.
64 *Ibid*., p152.
65 George Woodcock, 'Four paintings by Jankel Adler', *Now: New Series, No.6* (1946), 31-32. For a comprehensive study of Adler, see eds. Jürgen Harten, Marc Scheps and Ryszard Stanislawski, *Jankel Adler, 1895-1949* (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1985).
66 See the biographical overview of Adler's life in eds. Harten, Scheps and Stanislawski, *Jankel Adler, 1895-1949*, pp13-38.
67 *Ibid*., p36.
68 See Nehama Guralnik, 'Jankel Adler: European Artist in Quest of Jewish Style', in *Ibid*., pp219, 228.

69 Herbert Read, 'Jankel Adler, The Artist', Freedom (28 May, 1949); reprinted in ed. David Goodway, *Herbert Read: A One-Man Manifesto and other writings for Freedom Press* (London: Freedom Press, 1994), pp134-136.
70 On Adler's *The Mutilated* (1943) and related wartime works, see Ulrich Krempel, 'From Expressivity towards Constructivity, from Objectivism towards an Abstract Symbolism', in eds. Harten, Scheps and Stanislawski, Jankel Adler, 1895-1949, pp182-200.
71 Woodcock, 'Four Paintings by Jankel Adler', p32
72 Krempel, 'From Expressivity towards Constructivity', p197.
73 Woodcock, 'Four Paintings by Jankel Adler', p32.
74 George Woodcock, 'The Personal Principle', *Now: New Series No. 3* (1944), 63-64. See D.S. Savage, *The Personal Principle: Studies in Modern Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1944).
75 Herbert Read, 'Introduction' ed. Herbert Read, *Surrealism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936); reprinted as 'Surrealism and the Romantic Principle', in Herbert Read, *Selected Writings*, with a forward by Allen Tate (New York: Horizon Press, 1964), pp246-282.
76 Savage, *The Personal Principle*, pp5- 6, 8-9.
77 *Ibid*., pp22-23.
78 Alex Comfort, 'Art and Social Responsibility, '*Now: New Series, No. 2* (1944), pp39-51.
79 *Ibid*., p42.
80 *Ibid*., p43.
81 *Ibid*., p43.
82 *Ibid*., p48.
83 *Ibid*., pp48-49.
84 *Ibid*., p49.
85 AlexComfort, *Art and Social Responsibility* (London: Falcon Press, 1946), pp19, 24-25.
86 *Ibid*., p37.
87 Michel Remy, *Surrealism in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp228-240.
88 For a cogent analysis of Matta's morphological imagery, see Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938-1968* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), pp68-69.
89 A.J. McCarthy, 'Pattern of Frustration: Four Drawings by Stanley Jackson', *Now: New Series, No. 4* (1944), p32.
90 Simon Watson-Taylor, 'Growing up with anarchists, surrealists and pataphysicians', (2005), Christiebooks.com (4 February 2011); Michel Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, pp209-24.
91 Watson-Taylor, 'Growing up with anarchists, surrealists and pataphysicians', (2005). This account contradicts Remy's claim that Scotland Yard confiscated the page proofs for *Free Unions* when they invaded the offices of Freedom Press. See Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, p272.

92 The inside cover of *Free Unions Libre* identifies the journal as 'published in association with the Surrealist Group in England' with the 'assistance with typography and lay out by M.L. Berneri and Philip Sansom'. The same page had an 'Editor's Note' (dated July 1946) explaining that the material for the journal 'was assembled during the recent war' but that 'circumstances beyond the editor's control' had delayed its publication, with the result that 'many of the texts were written under the stress of different circumstances-though the value of their conclusions is perhaps enhanced rather than diminished at the present time'.

93 George Woodcock, 'Elegy for Fur-Covered Motor Horns', *Limbo* (February, 1964), pp49-52.

94 Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, 272; Olday was imprisoned for a year following his arrest for holding a false identity card in November 1944. He was briefly released on the 20th of October 1945, and then re-arrested on the charge of having deserted the army in 1943. He was then held in various institutions until his release on April, 20, 1946. During this period of incarceration Special Branch retained copies of correspondence between Olday and Guy Alfred, Vernon Richards, M.L. Berneri and Simon Watson-Taylor. See Simon Watson-Taylor to John Olday, 23 July, 1945 and John Olday to Simon Watson-Taylor, 2, August, 1945. The correspondence is contained in John Olday's file at the National Archives, Kew, London. Reference number: KV 2/3599.

95 Philip Sansom, 'War', *Free Unions Libres* (1946), 11; and John Olday, 'Poem', *Free Unions Libres* (1946), p17.

96 A translation of the text reproduced in *Free Unions* is as follows: 'To be happy, goddammit, you should kill the property owners, to be happy goddammit, you must cut the priests in two. (Sung by RAVACHOL as he went to the scaffold)'.

97 Letter from John Olday to Simon Watson-Taylor, 2 August, 1945. The National Archives, Kew, London. Reference number: KV 2/3599.

98 Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, p272.

99 'Editorial', *Free Unions Libres* (Summer 1946), pp1-2.

100 GeorgeWoodcock, 'Notes on Literary Anarchism in England', *Resistance* (March 1950),pp7, 15.

101 James Gifford, 'From *Booster* to *Bolero*',pp286-88.

102 Helena Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism* (New York: Paragon House, 1988) pp119-164.

103 See Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism*, 146-147; and Richard Sonn, *Sex, Violence and the Avant-Garde: Anarchism in Interwar France* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010), pp204-206.

104 On Breton's wartime politics and post-war turn to the utopian socialism of Charles Fourier and related revival of the ideals behind the FIAR, see Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros*, 65-75, 83-86, 108-09. On Fourier's libertarian socialism, see Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*

(Oakland: PM Press, 2010), pp149-152. Unfortunately Mahon does not address the alliance in the early 1950's between Breton and the anarchists associated with *Le Libertaire*. Pietro Ferrua has analysed this anarchist rapprochement in detail and has provided us with a rich compendium of related documents. See Pietro Ferrua, *Surréalisme et anarchism: Ecrits pour débattre* (Lyon: Atelier de Création Libertaire, 1992).

105 Conroy Maddox, 'Notes on Christian Myth', *Free Unions Libres* (Summer 1946), 14-15; on Maddox's anticlericalism, see chapter five of Silvano Levy, *The Scandalous Eye: The Surrealism of Conroy Maddox* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003).

106 Valentine Penrose, 'Collage', *Now: New Series, No. 3* (1944), n.p.; M.L. Berneri, 'Sexuality and Freedom', *Now: New Series, No. 5* (1945), pp54-60; André Breton, 'The Colours of Liberty', *Now: New Series, No.* 7 (February-March, 1947), pp33-34; André Masson, 'Four Drawings: *The Bull Fight*, *Sancta Ostia*, *Never Satiated*, *High Mass at Pamplona*', *Now: New Series No. 7* (February-March, 1947), n. p.

107 Robin Adèle Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp132-145.

108 Ibid., 137. *Tea at Franco's* is reproduced on page 138 of Greeley's book.

109 The two rallies, held on March 16 and May 26th, 1913 were a direct response to the French government's extension of conscription from two to three years in preparation for possible war with Germany. See Paul B. Miller, *From Revolutionaries to Citizens: Antimilitarism in France, 1870-1914* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp194-196.

110 Breton, 'The Colours of Liberty', pp33-34.

111 Woodcock, 'Elegy for Fur-Covered Motor Horns', pp49-50.

112 Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros*, pp92-93, 115-116, 149-159.

113 *Ibid*.,pp115-116.

114 Marquis de Sade, 'Frenchman! One more effort if you want to be Republicans', *Free Unions Libres* (1946), pp42-45.

115 Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp143-149.

116 Alex Comfort, 'Literary Sadism and the Origins of Miss Blandish', *Now* (February-March, 1947), pp6-13.

117 George Woodcock, 'Anarchist Living and the Practice of Art', *Black Moss* (Fall 1976), 16; reprinted in Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists*, pp110-116.