

# REVIEWS

Caroline Kosuch (ed.), *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde: Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective*

Leiden, Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2020; 280pp; ISBN 9789004410411

This collection of ten essays by historians, art historians and literary scholars hailing from the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Poland endeavours to explain why many modern artists between 1860 and 1940 embraced anarchist politics. The editor, Carolin Kosuch, contributes a brief introduction, in which she tells us that the project began at a workshop at the German Historical Institute in Rome in 2016. The ten essays are divided into three sections: Frictions: Aesthetics or Politics; Fractions: Declining – Pioneering – Redeeming; and Focal Points: Art and Education in Local and Transnational Perspectives. I did not find these divisions particularly meaningful. Instead of including abstracts for each article, it would have been more helpful to include a brief theoretical discussion with each section. That might have clarified why some of the essays engage with modern art less than one would expect.

The heavily French focus is understandable given the emphasis on modernism in the years when Paris dominated the art world, but given how popular anarchism was in Italy, Spain and Latin America, the book might have sought a broader geographic focus. Barcelona and Vienna were both sites of modernism, yet neither is mentioned. Within cities in which modernism thrived, artists tended to congregate in artists' colonies, yet there is little discussion of the bohemian enclaves of Greenwich Village, Montmartre or Schwabing, despite the fact that anarchists and artists shared these heterotopias. Indeed, the index has an entry for 'beauty' but none for 'bohemia' (the index is not reliable).

Several essays refer to the different interpretations of Renato Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 1968, and Peter Bürger's similarly titled book of 1974. Bürger equated modernism with aestheticism, regarding art as self-referential, while avant-garde artists wanted to de-institutionalise art and aspired to social change. Poggioli emphasised instead the drive for novelty and experimentation, and minimised the distinction between the two terms. Since artists who were anarchists sought parallel revolutions in art and society, most of the writers in this book favour Bürger, but none fully engage in a theoretical discussion of the modernist/

avant-garde distinction. Several of the essays discount any significant connections between anarchism and the avant-garde.

This collection is uneven. Articles by Antliff, Leighten, and Kosuch are excellent, and engage directly with the confluence of the terms contained in the title. Others are more opaque, scarcely mentioning art; Guerra doesn't cite a single artist, while others diverge from anything resembling the avant-garde. The editor might have exercised greater control over some of these contributions.

In 'The Symbolist Movement', Richard Shryock, a scholar of French literature finds 'the social element of symbolism as an avant-garde movement is very limited and largely superficial as its social dimension is not to be taken seriously' (p27). While clear and straightforward, he does not grapple with the issue of freedom as a symbolist value, or why anarchism resonated so strongly with these poets. Shryock misses the symbolic dimension of propaganda by the deed – bombs perceived as symbolic statements more than as practical aids to revolution, and as such appreciated by symbolists.

In 'Egoism, Homosexuality and *Joie de Vivre*: Jacob Epstein's *Tomb of Oscar Wilde*', Mark Antliff examines the controversy surrounding the prominently-displayed male genitals on the Tomb for Oscar Wilde set in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris in 1912 to trace a fascinating set of issues concerning art, anarchism and homosexuality. He explores sculptor Jacob Epstein's Jewish upbringing (a background that recurs in several chapters), as well as Emma Goldman, Walt Whitman and campaigners for sexual freedom on the tomb. Antliff is also good on French anarchist André Colomer and the Action d'art group, and includes a detailed discussion of Max Stirner's individualist anarchism. These myriad references might confuse a reader not acquainted with such now-obscure thinkers as Henri Bergson. *Tour de force* is an appropriate term to characterise this essay.

Patricia Leighten's 'Fauvism and Anarchist Individualism' addresses the central issue of the book most directly, and is enlivened by embedded colour paintings by Van Dongen, Vlaminck and other fauves. A lifetime of familiarity with the theme of modern art and anarchism shows in Leighten's deft summations of the art/political conjuncture in the fauvist artists she discusses. André Derain's anarchism did not last long, and Matisse's politics were uncertain, but Leighten explains with great clarity not only how the fauvists were politicised, particularly by anti-militarism, but how their stylistic choices matched their radical politics. Vlaminck, Derain and Van Dongen all visited Germany under the aegis of the Nazis during World War II. Though that is quite another story, it does call into question the depth of their political commitment. Would socialists have been less likely to collaborate?

It is unfortunate that Padularosa's entry, 'Anti-Art? Dada and Anarchy' follows those written by seasoned writers, as it suffers by comparison. When Padularosa ends a sentence about creation and destruction (echoing Bakunin) with the generalisation 'Those polarities can be considered the two decisive moments of the whole epoch of modernity' (p111), one wonders what more one can say. One finds out in the long paragraph on the next page, replete with similar pontifications. Tristan Tzara, usually taken to be a key figure in the creation of Dada, is barely mentioned here. The focus instead is on Hugo Ball, who is called 'the founder and most important exponent of Zurich Dada' (p102). It is not mentioned that the antisemitic Ball commented contemptuously on encountering Tzara, Marcel Janko and two other Romanians that 'an Oriental-looking deputation of four little men has arrived'. There is little discussion of anti-militarism or the war raging around them, nor of the anarchist rejection of nationalism.

David Weir's essay, 'Decadent Anarchism' belongs with the opening one on French symbolists, who overlapped with decadents. Weir grounds his chapter in specific cases, focusing on French writers Anatole Baju (who wrote *L'Anarchie littéraire* in 1892) and Octave Mirbeau. I wonder why Weir jumped to Wilde rather than considering another seminal French figure of the era, Alfred Jarry, whose absurdist play *Ubu Roi* of 1896 was widely perceived as an assault on the audience. Jarry's pataphysics, or the science of contradictions, would enhance a discussion of decadence. Weir's discussion of Wilde complements that of Antliff; he echoes Shryock in concluding that these decadents had little in common with anarchism.

After so much on France, Carolin Kosuch's discussion of Germany in 'Vanguard Creation in Fin de Siècle Anarchism' is welcome. Landauer, Mühsam and Toller were all German Jews involved in the Bavarian Council Republic of 1919. Landauer was a writer as well as an activist; his many quoted statements are helpful in understanding his position. Like Padularosa, Kosuch discusses the impact of Mauthner's theory of language, but there is overlap with the article on Dada. The Germans were more spiritual and mystical than their French and British counterparts, and more influenced by Nietzsche. Landauer perceived Judaism to be aligned with 'living socialism', re-energising a latent sense of community. A friend of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, Landauer viewed Buber as a model of art and action, the Jew as subversive, a radical elite.

Two German-Jewish intellectuals, Walter Benjamin and Gershom Sholem, took refuge in Switzerland during World War I, and shared thoughts on the paradoxical connections between Jewish mysticism and anarchism. Their mountain walks gave rise to airy speculation about theocratic anarchism, which is the object of Gabriele Guerra's chapter. To make the connection to the avant-garde, the

author quotes Poggioli and Bürger, as if citing these authorities clinches his case. Given the lack of any discussion of Spanish or Latin American artists, or any female artists, including this essay seems questionable.

Constance Bantman's chapter on 'Syndicalism and Art in France before 1914' with its focus on syndicalism and the working-class is welcome. This essay has the great advantage of concreteness, and even mentions real artists, like Maximilien Luce. She broadens the range of artistic sources by including analysis of satirical magazines such as *L'Assiette au beurre* and *La Voix du peuple*. Nevertheless, she concludes that 'the visual discourse and imagination of syndicalism were more rudimentary than those of anarchism' (p205). The discussion of the relation of image to print in syndicalist propaganda is well done; the section on Popular Universities strays too far from the theme.

Elisée Reclus and Gustave Courbet were exiled to Switzerland after the Paris Commune of 1871, making Federico Ferretti's 'Anarchism, Geography and Painting' the third essay set in Switzerland. It is remarkable to encounter Courbet and the early abstract painter Frantisek Kupka both as collaborators with Reclus, separated by thirty years. We also meet the neo-impressionists, and Ferretti emphasises how all of these artists and scientific figures like Reclus belonged to the same networks of friends, colleagues and publicists. Reclus was a major anarchist figure who appreciated art (though the abstemious Reclus did not get along with the boisterous Courbet).

Education was of particular importance to anarchists, who wanted to inculcate anti-authoritarian attitudes at an early age. In 'Teaching Revolution through Art?', Piotr Laskowski sees such enterprises as alternatives to militancy on the part of Paul Robin, Sébastien Faure and Francisco Ferrer. More useful than reviewing the ideas of Stirner, Bakunin, Hegel and Fourier would have been a review of progressive educationalists, as he later discusses Ellen Key. He admits that anarchist educators were more scientific than artistic, so there is little here that is relevant to the avant-garde, except for York's Ferrer School. He concludes, 'Anarchist educational enterprises seem not to have valued the avant-gardes' (p269). Principals Will Durant and William Brown did not differentiate between modern and classical art, and sought to democratise art and connect it to artisanal production. This is perhaps not the best way to conclude a study on the avant-garde, clearly peripheral here.

Readers will find most of these contributions of interest on their own, but the book does not cohere, in part due to a lack of conceptual grounding.

*Richard Sonn, University of Arkansas*

Ron Sakolsky, *Dreams of Anarchy and the Anarchy of Dreams: Adventures at the Crossroads of Anarchy and Surrealism*

Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2021; 616pp.; ISBN 9781570273766

Ron Sakolsky has long been known for his 700-page landmark anthology *Surrealist Subversions*, for his extensive creative writing and editorial work, and for his record of anarchist political engagement. One would expect a great deal from Sakolsky in a book on anarchism and surrealism, and this one not only fulfils, but even exceeds expectations.

*Dreams of Anarchy and the Anarchy of Dreams* is an invaluable work of historical scholarship that is impressive for both its enormous scope and also its depth of detail. It should certainly be recognised as the definitive work on its subject, and it is likely to remain so for a long time to come. The book covers a vast range of aspects of the anarchist-surrealist encounter. A comprehensive survey cannot be undertaken here, but some examples of its diversity of themes will give an idea of this richness.

Sakolsky confronts the perennial question of the relationship between dada and surrealism, in this case concerning the anarchistic qualities of each. While a common view is that dada was more 'anarchic', Sakolsky presents evidence that surrealism not only carried on the strong connection with anarchism found in dada, but in many ways deepened it considerably.

Many examples could be given of unexpected and fascinating results of Sakolsky's exhaustive research. One is his account of Breton's discovery of the roots of surrealist automatic writing practice in Kabbalah. He points specifically to the influence of the *Zohar*, with its idea of attaining a condition of nothingness that transcends ordinary rationality.

A particularly noteworthy discussion is Sakolsky's extensive account of the strong relationship between surrealism and dialectic. He demonstrates that there are strong links between surrealist modes of thinking, feeling, and perceiving, and those of the long dialectical tradition, extending back as far as Heraclitus and forward to the present.

The most significant dimension of the book concerning the history of anarchism is its account of the relationship between the surrealists, Communism, and anarchism. Sakolsky presents a meticulously detailed survey of the vicissitudes of the surrealists' collaboration with the French Communist Party and shows the futility of their illusions about using the Party for their radically liberatory ends. He corrects common misconceptions about the length of the surrealists' rather

fleeting association with the Party, and the depth of their ultimate disillusionment with its fundamentally reactionary nature.

Sakolsky also devotes considerable attention to the intriguing topic of André Breton's collaboration with Trotsky and the justifiably controversial 'Mexican Manifesto' that the two co-authored. He shows that despite the work's deep contradictions it still contains much that testifies to the anarchistic sources of surrealism. He also recounts the details of Breton's ultimate disenchantment with Trotsky and his path to a deep engagement with the anarchist movement.

One discovers that the first anarcho-surrealist manifesto was the Paris Surrealist Group's 'Opening Statement' in *Le Libertaire* marking their collaboration with the French Fédération Anarchiste. Sakolsky presents a very thorough and instructive account of the anarcho-surrealist history of this period.

He shows that the promise of creative symbiosis between anarchism and surrealism was often undercut by dogmatism and reactivity on one side or the other. He consistently, and, I think, successfully, tries to judge fairly the degrees of culpability of each side. He also demonstrates that, despite its shortcomings, the collaboration had some quite notable achievements.

On the more unambiguously positive side, one of the most fascinating and instructive parts of the book is Sakolsky's extensive account of how the symbiosis between anarchism and surrealism that seemed so elusive in Paris was achieved admirably by the Chicago surrealists. He presents an inspiring account of the deep, ongoing solidarity with anarchists and Wobblies that Franklin and Penelope Rosemont and their surrealist comrades established over a long period.

Another welcome finding of Sakolsky's research is the evidence he presents of a significant tradition of nature-affirmation and ecological consciousness within surrealism that long predated the contemporary environmental movement. He shows that surrealism had ecoanarchist dimensions that were much more radically ecological than anything that most of that movement has attained even to this day.

A final valuable finding of the work that deserves mention is Sakolsky's uncovering of deep affinities between surrealism and indigenous cultures. He documents ways in which both share certain values, sensibilities, and a profoundly anarchistic critique of the system of domination and its hierarchical dualisms.

In conclusion, anyone interested in the topic of surrealism and anarchism will find what we might call this chance meeting of the sewing machine of surrealism and the umbrella of anarchism on Ron Sakolsky's marvellously incisive dissecting table to be absolutely indispensable!

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Colin Darch, *Nestor Makhno and Rural Anarchism in Ukraine, 1917-21*

London: Pluto Press, 2020; 238pp; ISBN 9780745338873

In this excellent biography of Nestor Makhno, Colin Darch gets to the heart of the matter: how did Nestor Makhno win the popular support which enabled him to undertake his epic struggle against Bolshevik authoritarianism in the years 1919-21? Darch explains this by giving due weight to Makhno's early revolutionary career. Makhno's popularity can be dated to the aftermath of the failed Kornilov military coup in August 1917. Until then a typical soviet activist, Makhno made his mark when the anarchist led Committee for the Defence of the Revolution decided to push the revolution further forward and encourage the peasants of Guliaipole to seize the land which they saw as theirs. Similar moves were taken by radical SRs in the Volga region, but Makhno added a new element, establishing a Black Guard to protect the peasants' gains from the forces of the Provisional Government. The Black Guard did not stand down when the Bolsheviks came to power. In the months after October, as Ukrainian nationalists tried to establish their authority in Kiev, and White generals gathered in the Don country, Makhno's forces were needed to help the nascent Red Army keep the counter-revolution at bay. With the land seizures legalised by the Soviet land reform of February 1918, Makhno could begin the first experiments with anarchist communes.

These were, of course, cut short when the Central Powers occupied Ukraine after the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in March. Makhno's Black Guard, occasionally with the support of the Red Army, tried to organise resistance in April, before bowing to the military superiority of the occupying powers. However, as early as May 1918, there were the first signs of peasant resistance to the occupation, and by the end of June, Makhno was back organising that resistance; by the end of September his forces were engaging the Austrian garrison which controlled Guliaipole, and, as the First World War came to an end, it was his insurgents who took control of the town. From November 1918, Guliaipole was once again the base for a specifically anarchist administration, which the Bolsheviks mostly left in peace, even calling on Makhno for help in re-capturing Ekaterinoslav. For a second time, anarchist communes were established.

The rest of the Makhno story is better known, and Darch tells it with aplomb, but without this pre-history of 1917-18 it is impossible to understand the resilience of Makhno's forces and the strength of its popular base. Makhno co-operated with

the Red Army in Ukraine during the first half of 1919, and the anarchists organised their three congresses of soviets; but then the decisions of the fourth congress in June were deemed insurrectionary by the Bolsheviks and Trotsky began his campaign against the *Makhnovshchina*. Forced to operate behind the lines of the White General Denikin, Makhno staged a near miraculous counter-attack in September 1919 and helped the Red Army rout the general. Such grudging co-operation ended when, in January 1920, the Red Army ordered Makhno to redeploy to the Polish Front. The whole story was then repeated in autumn 1920, when the Red Army called on Makhno to help in conquering the final redoubt of Crimea, before outlawing his forces once again.

Darch gives a very balanced account. We learn of Makhno's triumphs, but also of his difficult personal life and the stories of depravity and brutality. He is keen to avoid anarchist polemics, and these can indeed be extremely tedious to the uninitiated, but avoiding polemics does result in a couple of minor weaknesses. First, the success or otherwise of anarchist agrarian communes is not really discussed. Bolshevik communes were an unmitigated disaster, were those established by the anarchists any better? It is clear that the source material now exists for some sort of judgement. Then, there is the issue of Makhno's pragmatism versus anarchist purism. There are several references to tension between Makhno and anarchist ideologues, but this issue is not really tackled head on. It comes to the fore in the final chapter on life in emigration, but by then these bitter controversies were of little consequence – Makhno's visit to Moscow in June 1918, and his re-acquaintance with Petr Arshinov, might have provided such an opportunity.

These are mere quibbles. Darch is right to conclude that the peasantry of Guliaipole 'wanted agency in the direct management of local affairs' (p162). They wanted to live without the interference of landlords, occupiers and commissars.

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### Laura Galián, *Colonialism, Transnationalism, and Anarchism in the South of the Mediterranean*

Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature, 2020; 218pp; ISBN 9783030454487

Laura Galián's explicit aim in this study is to locate practical ways of decentring anarchism by shedding its Eurocentric presuppositions. Her method follows the question: who has the right to write the history of anarchism? Refusing



to be coerced by 'the guardians-of-the-temple', Galián calls for an opening of the canon in order to be inclusive of anti-authoritarian activists South of the Mediterranean, even if these latter barely view their activism as anarchist. Galián deems the leaderless movements of the Arab Spring that erupted in 2011 onward anarchist. To her, the hesitancy of the Arab Spring activists to connect with anarchist literature is understandable given the late-nineteenth century European anarchists' paternalistic postures vis-à-vis the struggle the colonised had to instigate against colonialism. Historiographical work highlighting divergence and difference in anarchist experiences can reverse the bias against anarchism. For Galián, if the content of the militancy shaping political contention is overlooked, a crack in the canon of anarchism becomes a logical outcome.

The book heavily invests in effecting the crack, specifying that it is true to the spirit of anarchism to decentre all centres, including anarchism. Almost paternalistically, the book assumes that only anarchism will lend Southern Mediterranean activists the necessary substance that is capable of subverting the dictatorships of the market they have been suffering from. Galián is aware that spontaneous eruptions, while important, are not enough to sustain the struggle in the long run. Many readers will agree with Galián, since it is the lack of genuine alternatives that ushered in the restoration of the pre-2011 order. Towards that end, the author promotes anarchism as a philosophy which can be at home with postcolonial studies. Indeed, the author thinks that once the educated elites start introducing anarchism as a commonplace variation of postcolonial studies, a classless and stateless world order will automatically follow suit.

By the end of the book, Galián's implicit aim emerges. She actively works to transcend Marx's charge against oriental societies regarding their alleged closed temporalities. The theoretical abstractions pertaining to universality, enlightenment and modernity, or colonialism establish her claim that anarchism can be mobilised South of the Mediterranean for the struggle against dictatorships. Theoretically, readers will find Galián attuned to the practicalities of the struggle in the contexts studied; since in bringing radicalism to the centre of discussion, she insightfully seizes how globalisation has left no stone unturned, levelling all temporalities.

Still, one wants to ask if anarchism is, indeed, the kind of radicalism these subalterns of the south will want to embrace. By leaving money out of the discussion, the likelihood of ending with a quasi-radicalism *in lieu* of genuine radicalism is more than a mere suspicion. While real domination of capitalism is extinguishing the few remaining vestiges of freedom, Galián insists that radicals

from South of the Mediterranean should be viewed on an equal footing with their counterparts from the north! That insistence is, at best, short-sighted. Is it not true that capitalism is fine with the disappearance of the state as long as money is the means for the exchange of commodities? The current situations of Libya, Yemen and Syria are excellent cases proving the point. Hence, capitalism can always drain the subversive radicalism from militants by co-opting them with managerial roles that used to be covered by state officials, all for the ultimate benefit of capitalism.

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Anne Steiner, *Révolutionnaire et Dandy; Vigo dit Almereyda*

Paris: L'Échappée, 2020; 301pp; 9782373090710

The troubled life of Eugène Vigo, better known as Miguel Almereyda (the father of famous film-maker Jean Vigo) is well suited to discuss some important aspects of the evolution of the anarchist-leaning radical left of the French Belle Époque.

Young Vigo is a perfect representative of certain restless strata of the proletariat, eager to accede to new learning and upset at the glaring injustices of a rigidly authoritarian society. His childhood was hard and his formal schooling almost non-existent. Practically illiterate, the young man educated himself by reading Maurice Lachâtre's famed *Dictionnaire Universel*, and by attending the popular universities. But his moral education came mostly through two spells in the prison of the 'Petite Roquette', 'the children's hell', before he turned eighteen, for thefts he did not commit. Almereyda (a pseudonym borrowed from the hero of a popular novel), who called himself an 'anarchist by temperament' (p59), acquired quite a reputation in the press, starting with the anarchist weekly *Le Libertaire*. At first aligned with the individualists, he participated in the June 1904 Amsterdam Congress that saw the birth of the International Antimilitarist Association. His confidence in the ability of the individual to change society was combined with a 'faith in the action of active minority groups' (p73). This caused him to inch closer to the position of Gustave Hervé and the revolutionary socialists. In 1905, his name appeared on the famous 'Affiche rouge', a poster inciting recruits to ignore the orders of their superiors. Its authors are pursued for 'incitement to murder and insubordination' (p81). The following year, Almereyda becomes Associate Editor of *La Guerre sociale*,

Hervé's newspaper. Antimilitarist propaganda seems to him to be the tool to organize revolutionary collective action. He helps coordinate the mobilisation in favour of Francisco Ferrer, the theoretician of secular education who will be executed by the Spanish government. He also attempts to save the shoemaker Liabeuf, persecuted by the police, who killed two inspectors in revenge – an affair the anarchists hoped would do for the police what the Dreyfus affair had done for the army.

Facing the increasingly violent militantism of the Action Française, he creates the 'Jeunes Gardes', an action group that fought the extreme right's 'Camelots du roi' on the streets of Montmartre. He wants the creation of an insurrectional party able to unite anarchists, socialists and syndicalists, in spite of their disagreements. Hervé praises his 'great intellectual rigour, [...] his clear political intelligence, [...] his admirable physical and moral courage' (p187). But Almereyda is sick and he becomes addicted to heavy drugs to fight the pain. His political leanings change yet again. In 1913, he leaves *La Guerre sociale* in order to create *Le Bonnet rouge*, a stylish weekly that will soon turn into a daily. The former anarchist now supports the finance minister, Caillaux. 'Nattily dressed, hanging around with the fashionable lot, Miguel becomes the perfect Belle Époque bourgeois journalist, and the now daily *Bonnet rouge* is nothing but a government mouthpiece, devoid of soul or originality. This metamorphosis is a disappointment [...]' (p209). Where does the *Bonnet rouge* get its funds? After the start of the war, the newspaper is even financed by Malvy, the Interior Minister, whose connection with Almereyda raises highbrows. Daudet and Maurras, the leaders of the monarchist right, overjoyed at the idea of being able to get back at their old nemesis, call Almereyda a police informer, an *agent provocateur*, and even a German agent. The 'tragic Dandy, enfeebled by his illness' (p236) ends up in Fresnes prison, accused of spying for the enemy. He dies there on 14 August 1917, for still mysterious reasons. Murder? Suicide? Bad health? The hypotheses are many, but no definitive answer may ever be known.

Francis Jourdain, one of his oldest associates, called Almereyda 'a fascinating character whose life was distorted by a thousand legends, and whose real portrait still needs to be drawn' (p271). Thanks to this book, based on considerable original research in a number of archives and libraries, and supported by the use of until-now unknown documents, supplied to the author by Almereyda's great-grandson, we now have a complex, multidimensional and extremely evocative portrait of a key player in the political and media environment of the French Belle Époque. Anne Steiner authored a remarkable biography, enjoyably written, infused with sympathy for its captivating and original subject, but still strictly objective;

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a painting in bright lights and deep shadows that brings back to life a unique life-path and its times.

*Vittorio Frigerio, Dalhousie University*

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Carl Levy & Saul Newman (eds), *The Anarchist Imagination: Anarchism Encounters the Humanities and the Social Sciences*

London and New York: Routledge & CRC Press, 2019; 265pp; 9781138782761

This is a wide-ranging discussion of the intersections between anarchism and the humanities and social sciences. Most chapters follow a similar pattern: introducing an academic discipline, tracking the historical relationship of anarchism to the discipline, and exploring the ways that anarchist approaches might illuminate or disrupt the assumptions and analysis of the field and might, in turn, benefit from the lessons offered. The focus is predominantly on theory: on unpacking the fundamental assumptions of a field, understanding mainstream and marginalised approaches within the field, and considering the theoretical interventions that anarchism might offer. Individual chapters make for useful reading for scholars or students seeking to interrogate the foundations of their field, while the book as a whole offers many opportunities to reflect on anarchism's relationship to academia.

While this is first and foremost an academic volume, and dense reading at times, much of the work resonates with broader struggles. As the Russian invasion of Ukraine plays out, Chris Rossdale's chapter on Critical Security Studies suggests alternative ways of understanding the conflict, and what an anarchist response might look like. Elena Loizidou's discussion of anarchist opposition to conscription during WWI also feels particularly timely. Sandra Jeppesen makes useful contributions to our understanding of the history – and potential futures – of feminism, currently a flashpoint in political debates in many places. Vishwam J. Heckert invites us to connect our emotional lives, and embodied responses, to our political organising and alliance-building. Even the more theoretical and abstract chapters remain, on the whole, relevant and compelling beyond academia.

One of the threads that runs through the book is the connection between anarchist theorising and efforts to nurture anarchist movements, networks, and practices. Many of the authors note that their discipline has been influenced by anarchist organising, from Jeppesen's notes on the ways that anarchist-feminist struggles have shaped feminist thought through to Anthony Ince's arguments for

understanding movements for global justice and the reclamation of public space as shaping the development of geography. At the same time, there is a frequently expressed (though not universal) concern in *The Anarchist Imagination* with ensuring that anarchist approaches to academia result in meaningful outcomes, including expanding people's imagination of possible alternatives. Ruth Kinna, for example, argues for the value of engaging with political science in order to persuade others that democracy is about more than the electoral system, while Judith Suissa sees anarchist interventions into the philosophy of education as vital to making a prefigurative and transformative approach to education visible, and therefore possible, beyond either state-controlled education or private market-based neoliberal education. There is a clear sense of anarchist theorisation as both informed by, and speaking back to, anarchism more broadly.

Given the complexity and diversity of anarchist traditions, this unsurprisingly leads to some contestation about exactly how anarchism should be defined. Several of the contributions invite us to expand our understanding of anarchist theory. There are some tussles over whose work does and does not properly fall within the anarchist canon, although arguably at times these do not go far enough and gloss over important critiques. It is, for example, strange to see Hakim Bey (Peter Lamborn Wilson's pseudonym) approvingly cited as a key thinker in the pillars of Newman's 'postanarchism' with no mention of Wilson's writing in support of paedophilia, which colours the reading of his work in many anarchist spaces. Similarly, Zaheer Kazmi notes himself that while he argues for including 'anarcho-capitalists' under the anarchist umbrella, many anarchists object strongly to the idea. Kazmi connects his arguments for a larger umbrella to a reflection on the structure of Anarchist Studies itself, noting that the area is relatively small and insular. Although Kazmi's injunction towards self-reflexivity in understanding how those within Anarchist Studies construct anarchism is a useful one, the solution of expanding the anarchist canon towards right-libertarianism is not convincing. Jeppesen, Mohammed A. Bamyeh, Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Maia Ramnath offer, perhaps, a more promising route towards the expansion of anarchist theory, drawing on lessons from movements and thinkers that do not necessarily consciously self-identify with anarchism, and those beyond the Western anarchist canon.

Overall, this is a comprehensive volume which covers significant ground, sketching the historical and theoretical trajectory of anarchist interventions into sociology, International Relations, Critical Security Studies, political science, feminism, geography, postcolonial theory, legal studies, philosophy of education, religious studies, aesthetics, anthropology, and linguistics. Given the ground

covered, it is unsurprising that some important issues have been touched on only briefly, or omitted altogether. While the authors engage extensively with theoretical assumptions and perspectives, methodology tends to be mentioned in passing at best. Given the anarchist focus on process, there is room for more reflection on how anarchist methodologies have been, and might be, developed in different disciplines. Jeppesen and Ince provide thoughtful engagements with Indigenous perspectives, including noting that these have tended to be sidelined within Western anarchism; there is certainly more room for Indigenous anarchist theorisation within Anarchist Studies, as well as more from the Global South to complement the work by Bamyeh and Ramnath. There are many disciplines which remain unrepresented, including disability studies, which might have significant potential in contributing to how we think about key themes within anarchist theorisation. It was also notable that one could read this entire book and remain largely unaware of the existence of the internet, despite its contributions to anarchist organising and the spread of anarchist ideas. Gaps such as these are unsurprising given the remarkable scope of the book, and do not diminish from the significant contributions that it offers.

*Sky Croeser, Curtin University, Noongar Boodjar*

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**Peter Wilkin, *Fear of a Yellow Vest Planet. The Gilets Jaunes and the Battle for the Future of France***

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Since the Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests) took France by surprise in 2018, and while the movement's future remains a matter of speculation, it has – understandably – garnered a great deal of media and scholarly attention, often with widely divergent interpretations. Peter Wilkin sees the Gilets Jaunes primarily as a manifestation of 'progressive populism' in the midst of a reactionary populist groundswell across Europe and globally. Dismissing the Gilets Jaunes' frequent caricature as 'beaufs' (hicks), which continues to inform much of its mediatic and scholarly depiction, he portrays their protest as an 'appeal for social and economic justice' derived from Enlightenment ideals of popular sovereignty. Their mobilisation, Wilkin stresses, is also aligned with Global South protests against austerity and the debt crisis, demanding and enacting direct participatory democracy and calls for social justice, self-help, direct action and mutual aid – hence also the parallels with anarchist theories and movements drawn by Wilkin. Such challenges to

the post-Cold War hegemonic neoliberal narrative are part of ‘a chain of events that, although not identical in outlook, have offered a progressive alternative to counter the reactionary populism of the far right and also to neoliberalism’ (p9). Wilkin’s explanation for the movement’s emergence intersects the local and global, combining world system theory with more specifically French factors; his claim that the Macron presidency and irruption of the *Gilets Jaunes* are intrinsically linked, as symptoms of the transformations of French society, is particularly convincing. Central to this claim is a challenge to the widespread notion of France as a socialist dirigiste state, with a reminder of its capitalist nature despite open hostility to the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ model. Wilkin similarly debunks Macron’s ‘radical outsider’ persona, by recalling his financial and media connections and background as a quintessential product of France’s elite ‘meritocracy’. Macron’s empty rhetoric of radical change and reform of a corrupt elite system is in fact, as Wilkin emphasises, a typical populist trope.

Wilkin’s argument is less compelling when it comes to the vexed question of the *Gilets Jaunes*’ partisan politics, and especially their links with the far right. The presence of the far right at *Gilets Jaunes* ‘acts’ and attempts at recuperation by far-right leaders such as Marine Le Pen, as well as the issue of antisemitism, are promptly dismissed as unsurprising – ironically downplaying the movement’s inherent diversity, which is central to Wilkin’s point of the *Gilets Jaunes* being a progressive populist uprising rather than a coherent social movement. Wilkin considers some of the *Gilets Jaunes*’ themes and practices – horizontalism, calls for the general strike and direct democracy – to bolster comparisons with Occupy and the revolution in Rojava; however, this is not fully convincing, in the absence of a comprehensive analysis of their key themes, slogans and repertoires, which are not that easy to interpret politically. For instance, the occupation of roundabouts and importance of bread-and-butter demands, are more mundane aims and means, but are as important political signifiers as the general assemblies and organisational networks foregrounded here. Similarly, the *Gilets Jaunes*’ vandalism is barely mentioned. There is a case for this approach, to restate the movement’s progressivism and emphasise the shocking repressive violence levelled *at* the *Gilets Jaunes*, but it does seem quite simplistic at times. Citing the polemic philosopher Michel Onfray as an authority on antisemitism is also ill judged, given Onfray’s own growing association with the far right. The study is more assured when examining populism and the crisis of representative democracy in France, challenging the lumping of all populists into one category, and arguing for the *Gilets Jaunes* as progressive populists – all of which are urgent themes well beyond France.

Overall, far from a ‘hot take’ on a developing situation, this is an interesting study of both the Gilets Jaunes and Macron’s presidency, offering long-term perspectives on the radical left, the French state and the entanglement of neoliberalism and populism at a time of profound democratic crisis.

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Voline, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, introduction by Iain McKay, Foreword by Rudolf Rocker

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Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eichenbaum (1882-1945), known as Voline, lived a typical life of a transnational anarchist in the early twentieth century, which is described in Rudolf Rocker’s short biographical introduction (pp9-15). Once he began to study law in St Petersburg it would not be long before he joined the Russian labour movement in 1901. Six years later, Voline was sentenced to exile in East Russia but escaped to Paris, where through his contact with Russian and French anarchists, A.A. Kareline and Sebastian Faure, respectively, he turned into a full-fledged anarchist. Due to his anti-war activities, he left France in 1915 for New York, where he was a member of the editorial board of *Golos Truda* (The Voice of Labour), which moved to Petrograd after the revolutionary events in early 1917. There, he witnessed the Bolshevik prosecution of anarchists and ‘joined the revolutionary army of Nestor Makhno’ (p12) in 1919. Like other anarchists, e.g. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, he left Soviet Russia again in late 1921 and became an anti-Bolshevik anarchist writer. In Berlin, he published a work about the anti-anarchist violence of Lenin and his followers – *Die Verfolgung des Anarchismus in Sowjetrussland* (The Persecutions of the Anarchists in Soviet Russia, 1923) – a first attempt to reflect upon the revolutionary years between 1917 and 1921, which he would later extend. This extended work is titled *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, originally published in French, two years after Voline’s death in 1947, under the title *La Révolution Inconnue*.

This new reprint of *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921* is important, as Iain McKay argues in his very extensive but important introduction (ppvii-xcv), because the work ‘is a classic anarchist account of the Russian Revolution’ (pvii). It not only provides ‘an eyewitness account of the defining period of the twentieth century’, but at the same time ‘seeks to draw appropriate conclusions to help revolutionaries avoid its errors’ (pviii). According to McKay’s evaluation,



which can only be agreed with and supported, Voline's reflection on the Russian Revolution presents 'an example of history from below, from the perspective of the working classes' (pix). As an anarchist, Voline's evaluation of the leading Bolsheviki is hardly surprising: he 'is harsh on Lenin, Trotsky, and Marxism in general' (pxvi) and 'shows in microcosm the overall Bolshevik perspective and how it hindered the local initiative needed to solve the problems the revolution faced' (pxxxvi). While Voline provides a survey of the historical events leading up to 1917 (pp27-124), the main part focuses on the dualism between anarchism and Bolshevism (pp173-432), the Kronstadt Rebellion in March 1921 (pp441-538), and the Makhnovist movement in Ukraine between 1918 and 1921 (pp541-711), important events after the October Revolution of 1918, for which McKay also provides contextualisations that will especially help unfamiliar readers (pplii-lxvi and lxvii-lxxxii).

Voline thereby intended to provide further insights into revolutionary processes and the dangers related to them, as he considered that 'it is not known how to study a revolution, just as it is still not known how to write the history of a people. Moreover, authors, even experienced and conscientious, commit errors and negligences which prevent the reader from getting a clear understanding of their theme' (p19). Knowing from his own experience, that '[i]n the terrible whirlwind of revolution, a multitude of facts, engulfed by crevices which open and shut at every instant, remain undiscovered, perhaps forever' (p19), Voline intended to present an examination of the Russian Revolution and the following events 'with complete objectivity' and based on 'the available authentic facts' (p21). While 'Red October' was not really revolutionary, as '[t]here was no street fighting, no barricades, no widespread combat. Everything happened simply and quickly' (p164) and Lenin had led nothing more than a 'palace revolution' (p164), the consequences of this act would not be peaceful at all. The social revolution that had now begun, led to a struggle between the anarchist idea and the Bolsheviki, who challenged the former, yet 'not by means of an open and honest struggle, but with the same methods of repression that it had employed against reaction: methods of pure violence' (p174).

The conflict seemed inevitable, as 'the Anarchists say, it is necessary that society be organized. But this new organization should be done freely, socially, and, certainly, from the bottom' (p177). That the further course of the revolutionary process, in contrast to Lenin's and the Bolsheviki's claim, was something that could lead in different directions and that there existed political alternatives until 1921 is shown by Voline's recapturing of the events in Kronstadt and Ukraine. *The Unknown Revolution* consequently provides an account of the revo-

lutionary alternative, an 'alternative that embodies the initial hopes and desires of every rebel: anarchism' (pxciv). It can therefore only be recommended to scholars and activists alike, because the more we know about the dangers of revolutionary processes and their possible corruption by small political minorities, the stronger the anarchist alternative, i.e. a democratic, grassroots revolution, may eventually be in our own century.

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