

# Anarchist Studies

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Cover illustration: © Luis Jacob, courtesy of Brich Libralato, Toronto 'A Dance for Those of Us Whose Hearts Have Turned to Ice, based on the choreography of Françoise Sullivan and the sculpture of Barbara Hepworth (with Sign-Language Supplement)', 2007; still from video installation.

Peruvian-Canadian artist Luis Jacob has been involved in the Toronto anarchist milieu for many years. In the summer of 1998 he helped found the Toronto Anarchist Free School (1998-2001), and he has participated in the Free School's successor, Anarchist U (2003-present). In addition to his activism, Jacob is an artist and curator who has mounted a number of exhibitions related to Queer culture (notably 'Out of the Showers and Into the Streets: Remembering the Bathhouse Raids', Art Metropole, Toronto 2001, and 'The JDs Years: 1980s Queer Zine Culture from Toronto', Art Metropole, Toronto and Helen Pitt Gallery, Vancouver 1999). As his politics evolve, so too does his art. 'A Dance for Those of Us Whose Hearts Have Turned to Ice' includes a pamphlet of quotations by anarchist artists and critics and caused a sensation this summer at Europe's preeminent contemporary art exhibition, Documenta 12.

Allan Antliff

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## ANARCHIST STUDIES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

By coincidence, both Jon Purkis and I will be resigning our posts in *Anarchist Studies* after this issue: Ruth Kinna will then become editor, and Dave Berry will be book reviews editor. This will, inevitably, lead to some changes in the journal, and so it seems a good moment to review progress so far, and to consider the way ahead. This section groups together some texts by people who have been involved with *Anarchist Studies* for many years: their judgments and opinions are not being presented as definitive rulings, and I know that Ruth will welcome any feedback or commentaries on these ideas.

Back in 1997 I was surprised and delighted to realize that *Anarchist Studies* had reached its fifth year. Ten years later, it is still developing, and I hope it's still interesting and relevant.

*Sharif Gemie*

### A brief history of *Anarchist Studies* (so far)

#### LEWIS CALL

For the past fifteen years, AS has been many things: innovative, insightful, provocative, occasionally outrageous – but never boring! AK Press has called *Anarchist Studies* ‘the premier scholarly journal on anarchism ... erudite, and informed.’<sup>1</sup> AS provokes strong feelings, pro and con – surely a sign of success for any anarchist publication. Reviewing the AS archive, one is struck by the remarkable consistency of what we may perhaps call the *Anarchist Studies* project. Since its inception, the journal has consistently attempted to broaden the scope of anarchist discourse by introducing themes, topics, perspectives and methodologies which have not traditionally been considered relevant to anarchism. This essay will examine that ambitious attempt, paying particular attention to the ways in which AS has tried to make anarchism more theoretically sophisticated, more green, more international, and more applicable to the political conditions which obtain in the era of fully globalised capital.

*Anarchist Studies* arrived with a bang in the spring of 1993. The first issue featured a lead article on anarcho-syndicalism by Murray Bookchin, who was by then one of the international anarchist community's best known intellectuals. From the very beginning, however, it was apparent that AS would do much more than simply publish and discuss the pronouncements of anarchism's ‘great men’ (though the journal would always continue to offer

intriguing interpretations and re-assessments of Godwin, Kropotkin, Bakunin, Stirner, Chomsky, Bookchin, etc.). Thus the first issue also featured a piece on Wilhelm Reich and sexuality in the Spanish Revolution by Richard Cleminson, and a look at the anarchist art of John Cage, by Richard Kostelanetz. In his editorial introduction to the second issue, Tom Cahill made the desire for innovation explicit: ‘We might be bold about it and claim to be part of an effort to re-define what is central and what is marginal.’ The underlying objective was perhaps a bit hazy at first, but it would gradually become clearer as the journal grew and matured: the idea was to build new forms of anarchist thinking, criticism and politics which would update the received traditions of ‘classical’ anarchism, in order to make anarchism more meaningful and relevant in the postmodern period.

When Tom was forced to step down as editor due to a kidney transplant in 1995, Sharif Gemie took the editor's chair (‘an attractive piece of furniture’ with ‘a few distinctive bumps and scratches,’ he joked in AS 3:1). Sharif made it clear that he would continue to nurture the creative, experimental spirit which had already become such an important part of AS: ‘One of the most encouraging signs is that a distinct “AS style” seems to be emerging: one that is at once sympathetic to but also critical of the anarchist tradition,’ he wrote in his first editorial (AS 3:1).

Sharif set an ambitious agenda: more articles about sexual politics, more on anarchism and post-modernity, more ‘green’ articles, more on the Third World. The journal's diverse collection of contributors would deliver. AS 4:1 brought an important account of ‘free love’ in Imperial Germany by Hubert van den Berg. AS 4:2 featured a groundbreaking piece on ‘Anarchy on the Internet’ by Chris Atton. When this article appeared in October 1996, the Internet had been around for about thirteen years (and had been well-known for much less time), and the World Wide Web was still a relatively recent invention. But as Atton made clear, anarchists already understood how this technology could dramatically expand the opportunities for alternative electronic publishing.

By 1996, the anarchist community had begun to view AS as a major site of intellectual discussion and (in the best sense of the word) argument. The Debate section was introduced in AS 4:2; it featured a lively, energetic encounter between L. Susan Brown and Janet Biehl, based upon Bookchin's critique of Brown's work in *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*. AS 5:1 included debate about van den Berg's article. AS 6:1 offered a debate about Paul Nursey-Bray's reading of Godwin (which had appeared in AS 4:2). AS 6:1 also contained my first contribution to the journal, an attempt to re-read early modern political philosopher John Locke as a proto-anarchist. I was a young graduate student when I wrote this piece; how delighted I was when I received AS 7:1 (March 1999) and saw Dave Morland and Terry Hopton's sophisticated ‘Locke and Anarchism: A Reply to Call.’ I had never imagined that anyone might find my work important enough to challenge. Suddenly I

felt that I was part of something larger, a vibrant intellectual community that cherishes the tradition of civilized intellectual debate which stretches all the way back to the ancient Greek city-states.

AS has published papers on a remarkably diverse array of topics over the past fifteen years. Still, certain general trends have emerged. For example, AS has always recognized the vital role which postmodernism and post-structuralism play in contemporary debates about anarchist theory. By no means has AS provided an uncritical endorsement of the various 'post-' theories. Instead, the journal has consistently offered a stimulating conversation about the relevance (or irrelevance) of these theories to contemporary anarchism. In AS 5:2 (October 1997), Andrew M. Koch considered the possibility that Max Stirner may have been the first poststructuralist, while John Moore offered a review article on anarchism and poststructuralism. In October 1999, John (now Associate Editor) guest-edited a special issue of AS on Anarchism and Science Fiction. In his editorial introduction, John made explicit the intriguing connections between anarchism, postmodernism and science fiction, citing the work of political philosopher Todd May and that of American SF writer/critic Samuel Delany. I was happy to see my essay on postmodern anarchism in the novels of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling appear alongside excellent anarchist readings of Pat Murphy, Joan Slonczewski, Eric Frank Russell and Star Trek's Borg. AS 8:1 featured a sophisticated review essay by Karen Goaman and Mo Dodson on Habermas and the postmodern turn. Saul Newman, who is now a leading figure in the growing field of 'post-anarchism,' has continued to develop the poststructuralist reading of anarchism, offering a very thought-provoking piece on Stirner and Deleuze in AS 9:2, as well as a stimulating paper on anarchism, Marxism and Bonapartism in AS 12:1.

The journal's commitment to a theoretically sophisticated anarchist discourse is very deep, and that commitment is not limited to those theories whose names begin with 'post-'. AS has also consistently insisted that anarchism must address the concerns of feminists and gender theorists. The connection between anarchism and feminism is not a new one; certainly anarchists have recognized this connection since the days of Emma Goldman. (Goldman herself has drawn the attention of several AS contributors: Cliff Hawkins looked at her views on political violence in AS 7:1, while Jim Jose assessed her contribution to anarchist theory in AS 13:1.) However, AS has done quite a bit to strengthen, expand and radicalize the anarcho-feminist connection. In AS 3:2, Val Plumwood examined issues of privacy from an anarchist feminist perspective. Hélène Bowen Raddeker offered a fascinating look at Japanese anarcho-feminist Ito Noe in AS 9:2. The journal's commitment to anarcho-feminism has been part of a broader attempt to ensure that anarchists will take seriously issues of gender and sexuality. Richard Cleminson, who has been a regular contributor to the journal since the beginning and an Associate Editor since 1998, has done a great deal to move this project forward. In AS

5:1, Richard continued to explore the theories of sexuality which developed among the Spanish anarchists, focusing this time on Félix Martí Ibáñez. In October 2000, Richard guest-edited another special issue of AS, this one on Anarchism and Sexuality. As he observed in his editorial introduction, AS 8:2 demonstrated 'the extremely diverse set of interventions that anarchists in one shape or another have made to tackling sexuality and gender in different countries over time.' This issue featured essays on a breathtakingly broad array of topics, including sexuality in the Spanish Civil War, anarchist discourses on masturbation, the sexual revolution in 1960s Germany, and even a discussion of anarchism and the Marquis de Sade. More recently, the journal has begun to explore the intersection of anarchism and queer theory. Aaron Lakoff's interview with Yossi represented an initial exploration of the vital connections between anarchism and radical queer culture (AS 13:2). The theoretical terrain surrounding 'queer anarchism' appears to be very rich indeed, and I hope that we will see more work on this important topic in the future.

Those of us who have been following AS for some time remember with fondness the journal's old black and red covers – very traditional, very 'old school' and, until 1996, quite devoid of graphics! However, a journal as subversive as AS could hardly remain content to promote the colours of 'classical' anarchism alone. In retrospect, it is not surprising that the journal developed what Tom Cahill called a 'green tinge' (AS 2:2). In his Autumn 1994 editorial, Tom argued that 'the environmental movement would benefit greatly from a bit more anarchist input.' I would only add that the reverse is also true: anarchism has benefited greatly from its encounter with environmentalism. AS 2:2 featured an important piece on sustainable development by Glenn Albrecht, and an insightful look at Peter Marshall's 'libertarian ecology' by John Clark. The review section in that issue focused heavily on green themes, and the journal's book reviewers would continue to discuss green politics, ecology, urban planning, etc. In its green moments, the journal has managed to escape briefly from its ivory tower and focus on 'real world' social and political movements. Examples of this phenomenon include Ian Welsh and Phil McLeish's piece on anarchist opposition to the UK Roads Programme (AS 4:1), Chris Atton's study of the *Green Anarchist* newspaper (AS 7:1), and Ben Lawley's look at ecological libertarianism in the UK Social Housing Development (AS 9:1). Although the journal has remained comfortable in its academic 'niche,' pieces such as these have ensured that AS would also remain relevant to practicing non-academic anarchists. AS 12:1 featured two papers on ecology: Viktor Postnikov's study of ecological thinking in nineteenth-century Russia, and Robert Graham's provocative critique of social ecology. (The latter piece proved so controversial that it was still provoking debate late in 2006; AS 14:2 featured a spirited exchange between Graham and John Clark.) I am confident that AS will continue to insist that the proper colours of twenty-first century anarchism must surely be black, red and green.

*Anarchist Studies* has always tried to move the anarchist discourse beyond its European origins. AS 6:2 featured a remarkable article by John A. Rapp on the connections between Daoism and anarchism. By this time (1998), AS had already run several articles on Asian anarchism, including Mihara Yoko's 'Anarchism in Japan' (AS 1:2) and John Crump's 'Anarchism and Nationalism in East Asia' (AS 4:1). In his editorial for AS 8:1 (March 2000), Sharif Gemie spoke admiringly of Rapp's paper on Daoism, and invited readers to submit 'essays on the Islamic contribution to anarchism.' He thus identified what was, at the time, a major lacuna in AS: although the journal had done groundbreaking work on Asian anarchism, there had not yet been anything on anarchism in the Islamic or Arab worlds. The fascination with Asia continued with Rapp's work on Maoism and anarchism (AS 9:1), and Raddeker's piece on Ito Noe (AS 9:2), but it was not until 2002 that AS explicitly took up the question of anarchism in the Islamic world. No doubt this move was partly inspired by the events of 11 September 2001. In Spring 2002, AS published a timely, relevant 'round table' discussion on 'Anarchism after 11 September.' Contributors included AS regulars Sharif Gemie, Ronald Creagh and Karen Goaman, German commentator Johannes von Hösel, anarchist groups from Fraga and Istanbul, and world famous 'libertarian socialist' Noam Chomsky. This discussion provided badly needed historical and political context which helped to demystify the terrorist attacks; it thus represented a valuable antidote to the reductionist 'with us or against us' rhetoric of Bush and his cheerleaders in the mainstream media. In an important contribution to AS 10:2, Harold B. Barclay explored a 'possible relationship between the idea of anarchy and Muslim society.' Georges Rivière studied anarchist movements in Algeria in AS 11:2. AS 13:1 featured an indispensable discussion of 'The Torture Show – Reflections on Iraq and the West,' with contributions from Sharif Gemie, Allan Antliff and Marcus Milwright, and the prominent Turkish anarchist Sureyya Evran. AS 14:1 consisted mainly of an extended debate surrounding the French government's controversial decision to ban 'ostentatious' religious symbols – specifically, the Muslim veil – in French state schools. Sharif Gemie's insightful paper criticized the positive response of the French anarchist journal *Monde Libertaire* to this provocative ban, and numerous contributors commented and expanded upon Sharif's work.

For the past five years or so, AS has been focused – quite rightly, in my view – on the problems and perils of what we now call 'globalisation.' In their 2003 guest editorial, Ian Welsh and Jon Purkis argued compellingly that in the present situation, unfettered global capital is a far more dangerous force than the nation state, which does occasionally provide 'critical bulwarks against the worst excesses of global corporations operating within a deregulated market system' (AS 11:1).<sup>2</sup> (The fascination with post-structuralism also remained in evidence; Ian and Jon proved conclusively that no guest editorial is complete without a reference to the work of Todd May.) Continuing the theme that has guided AS since its creation, Ian and Jon called for a 'diversity of engagement'

which would not be embodied in any one particular form. This emphasis on the diversity of tactics and forms was exemplified by Allan Antliff's remarkable analysis of anarchist art, which built upon the work of the late John Moore, whose obituary appeared in the same issue (AS 11:1). Alan O'Connor's sophisticated piece on Mexican anarcho-punk continued this trend in the following issue, which also featured Karen Goaman's thoughtful paper on carnivalesque symbolic action in the anti-globalisation movement, held over from the overflowing AS 11:1. Interest in the issues of the global economy was so extensive that AS 12:1 featured a debate section on 'Anarchism and Globalisation.' Gavin Grindon continued the exploration of carnival's radical potential in AS 12:2, which also featured a look at anarchist modernism in Argentinian literature by Glen S. Close. In an ambitious paper in AS 14:2, Linden Farrer explicitly tied resistance to the G8 to post-structuralist anarchism, thus bringing together two major concerns of AS.

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize the importance of AS's remarkable book review section. Under the stalwart leadership of Carl Levy (from 1993 through 2001) and Jon Purkis (from 2002 until quite recently), *Anarchist Studies* has published thought-provoking reviews on a broad range of anarchist literature. The book review forum has always been a feisty, energetic section of AS. Not content to accept its given place in the back pages of the journal, the book review section has, from time to time, challenged and subverted the privileged position of the 'feature articles' – in the finest anarchist tradition! My understanding of the literature by, about, and of interest to anarchists has been greatly enhanced by these reviews and review essays. I am especially grateful for the frequent contributions of Brian Morris, Colin Ward, David Goodway, John Crump, Ruth Kinna, Karen Goaman and John Moore.

Where do we go from here? I hope that we will continue the project which began fifteen years ago, for that project is by no means complete. There are still anarchist stories which remain untold. For example, anarchists have not yet really dealt with the full implications of the insurgency which anarchism is currently conducting inside popular culture. Anarchism has become remarkably fashionable of late, and is depicted in mainstream culture in ways that are surprisingly positive. What are we to make of the amazing popularity of *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore's grim vision of a near-future totalitarian England, in which would-be 17th century 'terrorist' Guy Fawkes is not burned in annual effigy, but celebrated as a freedom fighter? In the hands of Hollywood's sometimes brilliant Wachowski brothers, *V for Vendetta* has been ably translated into a striking critique of Anglo-American politics in the post-9/11 world. What does it mean that, at a time when the forces of capitalism and imperialism seem more oppressively powerful than ever, popular culture can provide such positive anarchist narratives?

*Anarchist Studies* has come a long way over the past decade and a half. The journal has had two publishers. The move from Cambridge's White Horse

Press to London's Lawrence and Wishart in 2002 brought a smaller trim size, full colour covers (purists remain sceptical about the higher production values!) and modest opportunities for increased circulation. The journal has had two editors so far. I am grateful to Tom Cahill for getting the journal started in the first place, and to Sharif Gemie for a decade of hard work which has helped make AS into what it is today: one of the foremost fora for the serious discussion of anarchist theory and practice. I would also like to ask all AS readers to join me in welcoming our new editor, longtime AS contributor and Associate Editor Ruth Kinna.

And what about this 'brief history?' Has it been too celebratory? Probably. A journal which features the word 'anarchist' in its name has been in continuous publication for the past fifteen years, and shows no signs of stopping. In my book, that is cause for celebration. Are there aspects of the journal's history which should be approached with a more critical eye? Perhaps, but I leave that for the next history, and the next historian. Diversity of engagement means, among other things, that there are as many versions of *Anarchist Studies* as there are readers of *Anarchist Studies*. So come on, all you cyborgs and Situationists, you ecologists and egoists, you punks and perverts. Who will narrate the next version?

## NOTES

1. *AK Press*. Accessed 30 July 2007. <<http://www.akpress.org/2007/items/anarchist-studiestwelvetwo>>
2. Noam Chomsky has made a similar argument: 'My short-term goals are to defend and even strengthen elements of state authority which, though illegitimate in fundamental ways, are critically necessary right now to impede the dedicated efforts to 'roll back' the progress that has been achieved in extending democracy and human rights. State authority is now under severe attack in the more democratic societies, but not because it conflicts with the libertarian vision. Rather the opposite: because it offers (weak) protection to some aspects of that vision.' *Powers and Prospects*, Boston: South End Press, 1996, p. 73-74.

## Anarchist theory: what should be done?

### BRIAN MARTIN

Where is anarchist theory going? Where *should* it be going?

It's useful to make a comparison with other bodies of theory. Marxism and feminism spring to mind. Despite the collapse of socialist states, Marxism remains influential among scholars, among whom the study of Marx's works continues to play a big role. Anarchism shares with Marxism a preoccupation with classic theorists – for Marx and Engels substitute Bakunin and Kropotkin

– but anarchism has never had anything like the scholarly attention or intellectual commitment inspired by Marxism.

Feminism remains a vibrant theoretical enterprise, drawing on a variety of thinkers. Once again, anarchism has received far less scholarly attention.

Both Marxism and feminism were inspired by, and inspired, social movements. Each has developed esoteric theoretical branches, largely restricted to scholars (and maybe their students) and separate from the day-to-day concerns of activists. Anarchism has not had a theoretical wing of similar scale or exclusiveness.

In a narrow sense, anarchism can refer to a critique of the state and to anti-state practice. In a broader sense, it can refer to a critique of domination – incorporating a critique of the state plus critiques of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and other oppressive systems – and associated practices. Anarchists seldom try to impose an anti-state lens on all forms of oppression. But few Marxists and feminists are one-dimensional either.

More than other forms of critique, anarchism contains a vision of an alternative – a self-managing society – and preferred means for achieving it, namely a practice that reflects the goal. This is unlike Marxism, in which the ultimate goal of communism, a society without the state, has never been well articulated, and in which the means are justified by the ends: capturing state power is the means to achieve stateless communism. Feminists subscribe to an ideal of gender equality, but this has many versions, from anarcho-feminist visions to a hierarchical society in which women hold just as many positions of power as men. Feminists differ considerably concerning the means to achieve their ideals.

If social goals and methods play a large role in the anarchist project, what does this say about anarchist theory? Should scholarship be dismissed as elitist and therefore incompatible, as a means, with the goal of an egalitarian society? This doesn't make sense, at least in the short term, because anarchist practice needs critical scrutiny, like any other practice. But are there ways to supplement conventional modes of scholarly production?

Anarchists point to a long tradition of radical education, including schools in which teachers and learners make decisions collectively. Modes of decision-making are a key part of what is often called the hidden curriculum, namely the things learned through the structure of the educational process rather than the formal things studied. Egalitarian education suggests a different process for producing and using theory.

There is also a tradition of activist learning and teaching, especially in times of oppression, social crisis or revolution, such as teach-ins against wars and learning within opposition movements. However, this does not seem to have had much effect on the content of what is learned, nor has it given rise to sustained alternative modes of intellectual production.

Inspiration can be drawn from the new mode of network production, used in creating free software through voluntary contributions managed by an indi-

vidual or small group, and extended to other domains, most prominently wikipedia. How this could be adapted to intellectual work in more traditional areas remains to be seen.

Activist groups occasionally have adopted an extreme ethos of egalitarianism, making the assumption that everyone can develop the full range of skills needed in the group, everything from organising events, dealing with disputes and public speaking. This is commendable when it empowers members who might otherwise be stuck with less attractive tasks, but it may inhibit advanced intellectual work.

Studies of expertise show that many years of persistent practice and training are needed to make world-class contributions. Surely this applies to developing new anarchist theory. Yet becoming a talented theorist should not – according to anarchist ideals – lead to any special privileges. Managing the tension between expertise and egalitarianism is an important task for anarchists. The existence of this tension may help explain why anarchism has had such a low profile among scholars.

What sort of theory should be developed? One possibility is a high-level, grand theory of domination, oppression, inequality and/or hierarchy. It would bring together, or supersede, separate critiques of capitalism, patriarchy, the state and other oppressive systems. Anarchists have long been eclectic, freely drawing on other critiques, such as the Marxist analysis of capitalism. A grand theory of domination would be a specific anarchist contribution.

Another possibility is a high-level, grand theory of anarchist alternatives, providing the general conditions for and constraints on a society built around equality, solidarity and freedom. The alternative might be a single model or a set of plural, diverse self-managing societies. The theory might be centred on the alternative structures or it might focus on self-organisation, namely the process for creating and maintaining desirable alternatives.

Another opening for anarchist theory is addressing particular topics aside from traditional ones such as the state, education, and workers' self-management. Possibilities include bureaucracy, communication, defence and technology. Anarchist perspectives have little visibility in these areas.

Anarchist theory might also address personal and interpersonal dynamics, such as self-understanding, commitment, happiness, friendship and solidarity. Such issues are important in their own right and have connections to big-picture approaches to politics and economics.

Finally, there is meta-theory: an anarchist theory of theory, including an anarchist theory about anarchist theory. What is the role of theory in the anarchist project? Should theory include both simple and complex facets and, if so, how should the complex aspects relate to the simple bits? How and to what extent can theory become a collective project, linked with practice? Is there a simple way to learn how to develop theory, so that lots of people can join in?

There's certainly plenty to do!

## Facilitating diversity

### Some thoughts on being a book reviews editor

JON PURKIS

This is my last issue of the journal as the Book Reviews Editor and I would like to use this as an opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has worked with me during this time, whether it has been writing a review, recommending a reviewer, or making suggestions about possible reviews in the future. I'd also like to apologise to those people who I said that I'd get a book for and didn't: perhaps it was my fault, perhaps it was the publisher's! I would also like to make a number of observations about the ethics of reviewing (and also being a reviewer), prompted by my experience, but also because I think that these matters are under-discussed generally.

A starting point for this might be the hope that after five years of commissioning and editing book reviews for *Anarchist Studies*, readers were no less the wiser about my own anarchist politics and interests. Obviously, I have been involved in anarchist activism and academia too long for this to be the case, but one of the responsibilities of being a reviews editor is surely to try and represent the range of ideas within the field as much as is possible.

One may not always see the reviews editor as being a political position, but the selection of texts can create a feel for what the journal is about as much as the actual full length articles. Irrespective of which texts one actually 'commissions' (and of course there is no guarantee that they will appear anyway), every issue of *Anarchist Studies* creates its own special dilemma about the content that one is sent. How fair am I being to particular reviewers based on their observance of deadlines, their writing style or their experience? Does the order of the reviews favour a particular person? Should I call any of the submissions a 'review article' and therefore earn the reviewer some small status on their publications curriculum vitae?

In the context of a relatively low circulation journal these might seem needlessly trivial and obvious matters, but there are points of principle here, as with anything that involves working with other writers, researchers and their egos. There needs to be something of a consistency about how an editor deals with their reviewer as much as how the reviewer deals with the subject of their chosen text. Nobody wants to be told that they are a poor reviewer or that their writing style is amateurish, just as we as researchers despise the vindictive reviewer who apparently ignores the bulk of our work in order to exaggerate one particular grievance. Thus any anarchist involved in an editing process should always seek to empower rather than belittle the contributor, even if this involves considerable effort on their part.

Such ethical dilemmas are even more pertinent in an age where we deal with so many people through the medium of email, rarely resorting to the relative transparency of the telephone conversation. Approximately fifty per cent of the people that I have liased with as reviews editor I have never met and would probably walk past in the street. Fortunately, the sense of trust generated by a common purpose has overcome some of the limitations of virtual forms of communication.

Of course this must work the other way as well; reviewers have responsibilities too, and whilst we all have a few unreviewed texts propping open the door, it is simply a matter of admitting that a task is beyond us and letting the reviews editor know this (particularly when there are pushy publishers around!)

As a general point, I do look forward to the time when the sense of common purpose which has largely been my experience of being a reviews editor, also extends across more geographical boundaries and we begin to recruit more reviewers and writers from outside the Western anarchist axis of North America, Europe and Australia. However, there is a healthy turnover of new reviewers coming to the fore, some of whom are not 'official' scholars, but who bring their practical experiences of protest, of education, music and so forth to their critical work. This means that the journal may include reviews which are not exclusively 'about' anarchism but are penned by anarchists striving to generate more debate about anarchist concerns (see James Bowen's review in this volume). This also adds to the feel of *Anarchist Studies* being a little bit different to other journals, with a slightly looser remit of study (see 'Anarchist Studies and the Community of Scholars' in Volume 12 (1)).

I would certainly extend that analogy in terms of broadening the 'book' reviews section to something that might look a little more multi-media on occasion. After all, anarchist scholarship is now very well established in cyberspace and engagement with the electronic presentation of information and opinion needs to be taken as seriously as anarchist theory and practice in book form. Similarly, anarchist publishers such as AK Press now regularly produce DVDs of speeches, essays, songs and poetry, many of which deserve attention. At the other end of the technological spectrum, I would like to see the efforts of the Kate Sharpley Library – who produce a constant stream of booklets about forgotten figures in anarchist history, including a decent proportion from South America – a bit more rewarded in terms of reviewer interest.

So, it's been a good experience and I wish my successor Dave Berry all the best, just as I am grateful to Carl Levy for setting the benchmark for so long. Here's to healthy reviewing in the future.

## Such, such were the joys

### Confessions of an anarcho-editorialist

SHARIF GEMIE

About twelve years ago, Tom Cahill asked me to consider becoming editor for *Anarchist Studies*. The initial proposal was that we should co-edit the journal, but it was clear that, given Tom's continuing and serious sickness, co-editorship would quickly become sole editorship. I had not been expecting any such invitation, and I can remember feeling very uncertain. I anticipated many possible problems and dilemmas: most of these worries have proved quite illusory, although there have been a number of other issues which did surprise and concern me. Today I'm in the position of passing on the now attractively distressed editorial chair to Ruth, and taking this opportunity to reflect on twelve years of my life.

Without doubt, it has been a positive experience. When Tom passed on the editor's position to me, *Anarchist Studies* had only been published for two years. For better or worse, I've been central to defining and developing an identity for the fledging child. One point has to be stressed here: editing a journal is not like commanding a battleship. The editor cannot call down 'now turn to the left'; he cannot pick up the phone to demand 'write me three papers on the labour movement: and remember to spell it with a "u"'. It's been more like flying a hot-air balloon: we can go up or down; we can make some sort of decision about whether the outlook is set fair, middling or stormy; but we can't – easily – change direction. I've tried hard to keep an open mind, and nudge the little craft towards some friendly harbours. I've read Lewis's potted history of the past fifteen years and – while I can certainly see the trends he's identified – I have to say that these weren't conscious policies.

If you google on *Anarchist Studies*, you quickly come across an interview with Ben Franks, in which the pseudonymous interviewer remarks that anarcho-academics don't seem to be doing much: there's just the 'strangely sombre' *Anarchist Studies*. [<http://www.variant.randomstate.org/27texts/alliances27.html>] When I first read this, I felt annoyed. But, as I thought about it further, I felt more relaxed. I suppose that if *Anarchist Studies* can be now be labelled with this easy cliché, then it is has become easily identifiable, and this can be seen as the achievement of some sort of success. Rather than 'strangely sombre', I prefer the review published in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, 23:2 (Fall 2005).

This is an excellent, thoughtful and contentious anarchist publication. It represents the best of the academic anarchist press, engaging on a variety of issues, with a depth sorely needed by the milieu in general.

Let's be honest: *Anarchist Studies* is a good journal. The world's only anarcho-academic review. There are some fine competitors: *Social Anarchism* is a pleasant, relaxed read, with an attractive mixture of poetry, fiction, drawings and letters – but *Anarchist Studies* does better analyses and discussions. *Anarchy* has a massive circulation, an imaginative layout and its activist, polemical style is successful at drawing in a certain strand of militant youth – but AS is better at serious debate. *Réfractions* does some great papers, but its editorial style is inconsistent and the papers themselves are sometimes repetitive. *Democracy and Nature* promised a lot, but seems to have succumbed to the Fotopoulos syndrome, whereby every third footnote has to be a hymn of praise to the Great Editor. And so, gentle reader, our little baby has come to pull its weight. It's published some great articles which I think any journal of political or social debate would have been proud to publish. Perhaps more importantly, in almost every issue, there's usually been one article about which I've thought 'now where else could that have been published?' – a sign of the development of a genuine AS style.

My role in all this has been to make some rather limited decisions about style and scope. Occasionally outsiders seem to imagine that AS, a highly politicized journal, must be continually shaken by ferocious, political debates. It's actually been rather calm. In 1998, I decided that being editor on my own was rather lonely, and so I created the 'Associate Editors'. These supplemented the book review editor: I tend to think of them as the AS Editor's support group. Whenever there's been an awkward issue, I've sent round an e-mail and waited for pithy advice or at least sympathy. (John Moore was particularly effective in writing messages along the lines of 'well that's another fine mess you've got us into ...') The nearest thing we ever had to a political debate was the discussion concerning the reactions to Carol Hamilton's guest editorial in AS 9:2 – about which, on reflection, I now consider I was entirely right. The simple truth is that we're just too small a grouping to consider strong disagreements, and therefore anyone involved in AS at any level has probably decided in advance that they may as well rub along with the others.

There have been a few bumps along the way: some turbulence, to revert to the hot air ballooning metaphor. One issue that has come up several times has been the idea of publishing less academic pieces. Some contributors are fixed on the idea that AS should publish ten thousand word essays, each with at least fifty footnotes and obligatory references to Foucault. Particularly after we moved to Lawrence and Wishart, which meant a switch to slightly more space, I've thought that we can afford to publish some short, un-footnoted, opinion pieces alongside the standard academic essay. I've always tried to judge each text on its own merits, rather than demanding a standard format. Hence the piece on *Anarchism Lancastrium* (AS 10.1) was accepted even though it's clearly not a sophisticated exercise in media studies, but rather a simple, eloquent piece of autobiographical writing. I'd still like to see a step or two towards a rather more varied selection of different styles of writing.

Another issue has been the famous 'right to reply'. This has also caused 'some turbulence'. I've come round to thinking that any contributor to AS has a 'right to reply' if, firstly, they raise substantial points and, secondly, if they keep their reply reasonably polite. Several writers have expected the right to defame, insult and publicly humiliate those who dared criticize them – described once as 'the glorious polemical style of the 1960s'. I still consider that this style of writing is extremely off-putting, and that it encourages personal feuds rather than genuine debate. For this reason, insults and name-calling have been edited out of all contributions.

Of course, there has been a problem with the famous 'Grumpy Old Men' of anarchism. This was not unexpected, and – like wind and rain – just has to be put up with it. (I firmly intend to grow more immature with age, and have promised Ruth that I will not become her GOM.)

The greatest problem of all, and probably my biggest disappointment, has been the overwhelming silence of the readership. As editor, I get very little feedback at all. Perhaps one or two comments a year. This has made me feel extremely uncertain about the role of the journal. One of the reasons for the so-called 'humorous' editorials was simply my own uncertainty about what to say to the silent masses. (Although I still like the science-fiction parody of AS 4:2 – not an original joke, but nonetheless a good one.) For anarchists, some of you are very passive, silent people.

The best moments, however, have been getting in contact with people I'd otherwise never have known. Many of the contributors have thanked me, which is pleasing. There are many, many people I'd like to name here: too many for this short note. But, in particular, I'd like to thank Brian Martin, Lewis Call and L. Susan Brown: I've never met any of you face-to-face, but it's made me very happy to hear from you.

Okay, Ruth: the day is bright, the winds are fair although there's a possibility of turbulence over in the west, and the craft is straining at the ropes. Remember to take a thermos, some sandwiches and a coat (it can get cold up there). And a dictionary. And some binoculars. And a camera. Don't do anything stupid, but – also – don't play it safe. Have a good flight and a soft landing in twelve years. Me and Tom would like to come with you, but we're staying with the ground support team for the moment.

## Epilogue

RUTH KINNA

Sharif has put me at the helm and gone below deck. Fortunately he's not drunk; nor has he thrown himself overboard. Still, my excitement at the prospect of editing AS is matched by growing periods of apprehension.

Sharif and Jon, Tom Cahill and Carl Levy before them, have done an excellent job in establishing and sustaining the journal. It's clear from Lewis Call's review that AS has published some outstanding work, that it has shown an admirable openness to research in the field and that it has a growing reputation for tackling messy and difficult issues. *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* has this to say about issue 14.2:

*Anarchist Studies* continues to be one of the great contemporary anarchist periodicals. This issue demonstrates a trend that is lacking in North America: critical engagement. The French anarchist periodical *Le Monde Libertaire* more or less came out in support of the French state's ban on religious symbols (read: veils) in schools and this issue of *Anarchist Studies* is a series of ten introductions, essays, responses, and afterwords on the topic. At the heart of the issue is a certain kind of anarchist calculus. What does an anarchist reject first, the state or religion? Fascinating discussions that demonstrate how much better educated the Europeans are (with the caveat that most of the authors are hired intellectual thugs).<sup>1</sup>

It would be nice to maintain and build on this reputation. How? Tom Cahill gave the answers in issue 1. I plagiarize freely:

The success of AS depends on two things: first, the range and quality of the material submitted and second, a willingness to engage in constructive debate. Looking back on the past, it's of course possible to detect trends, but it's a mistake to think that these add up to a policy. If your interests or concerns have not been represented, then it's time you sent in a paper or even a proposal for an issue. AS is a peer reviewed journal which publishes the results of serious intellectual work (another of Tom's phrases) but contributors are not required to wear gowns and mortar boards or to produce references from employers. There is no requirement to submit 10,000 word articles; I draw the line at power-point slides but the guest editorial slot pioneered by Sharif provides space for short commentaries and these are also welcome. Equally, if you want to comment on a published piece, send in your response. There is, I think, a reasonable expectation that debates are conducted in a civil fashion, but full and frank disagreement is allowed.

So, in taking the wheel, I'm not attempting to chart a new course (too busy murdering metaphors).

Not Jack Sparrow, not Ahab. Call me Ishmael.

## NOTES

1. *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, 64 (2007), p.58.

## What is anarchist literary theory?

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### ABSTRACT

Over the course of its history, the anarchist movement has produced a form of literary theory – a critical aesthetics and epistemology grounded in its emancipatory ethics. In sketching an outline of this body of thought, this essay attempts to call attention to several aspects which offer a promising alternative to the sterility of the modes of theory dominant within the academy.

#### 1.

The recent revival of academic interest in the anarchist tradition has drawn new attention to its reflections in literature, particularly via the influence of the anarchist movement on avant-garde modernisms (e.g., Pound's poetry, Picasso's collages), and via the role played by figures of 'the anarchist' and 'anarchy' in certain narratives (e.g., Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* or Frank Norris's *The Octopus*).<sup>1</sup> However, this discussion has all but entirely omitted any consideration of the possible contributions of anarchism to literary criticism. As Roger Dadoun writes, this contribution is not simply a matter of cataloging 'anarchist elements in literature,' whether works by anarchist authors, addressing anarchist topics, or purporting to be stylistically anarchic (1997, translation mine). Nor is a coherent body of anarchist theorization on literature a mere hypothesis; it exists, albeit almost completely consigned to official oblivion, in the historical archives. Like other forms of literary theory which draw on the traditions of oppositional political movements, e.g., ecocriticism, postcolonialism, marxism, feminism, queer theory, etc., anarchist literary theory draws its inspiration from the body of thought and practices which have historically comprised the anarchist movement.

#### 2.

This tradition is manifold and still evolving; one can trace at least two major lines of development in anarchist theory, one of which leads from