

# ***Black Flag White Masks: Anti-Racism and Anarchist Historiography***

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## **Abstract**

Dominant histories of anarchism rely on a historical framework that ill fits anarchism. Mainstream anarchist historiography is not only blind to non-Western elements of historical anarchism, it also misses the very nature of *fin de siècle* world radicalism and the contexts in which activists and movements flourished. Instead of being interested in the network of (anarchist) radicalism (worldwide), political historiography has built a linear narrative which begins from a particular geographical and cultural framework, driven by the great ideas of a few father figures and marked by decisive moments that subsequently frame the historical compartmentalization of the past. Today, colonialism/anti-colonialism and imperialism/anti-imperialism both hold a secondary place in contemporary anarchist studies. This is strange considering the importance of these issues in world political history. And the neglect allows us to speculate on the ways in which the priorities might change if Eurocentric anarchist histories were challenged. This piece aims to discuss Eurocentrism imposed upon the anarchist past in the form of histories of anarchism. What would be the consequences of one such attempt, and how can we reimagine the anarchist past after such a critique?

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## **Introduction**

*Black Flag White Masks* refers to the famous Frantz Fanon book, *Black Skin White Masks*, a classic in anti-colonial studies, and it also refers to hidden racial issues in the history of the black flag (i.e., anarchism). Could there be hidden ethnic hierarchies in the main logic of anarchism's histories? The huge difference between the anarchist past and the histories of anarchism creates the gap here. Could it be that the anti-racism of the anarchist past has been reconceptualized through Eurocentric, ethnocentric lenses when it was translated into histories of anarchism?

Although anarchists have a central interest in problems of domination and oppression, concepts of race and ethnicity have not been subject to sustained analysis in anarchist literatures. This failure can be explained with reference to

the priority that has been given to the great ideas of a few dead white men in the historical analysis of anarchism. Recent shifts within anarchist movements provide a new impetus to challenge this approach and to draw on traditions of thinking about racism, ethnicism, internationalism and colonialism to explore the possibility of developing an alternative.

The question is how the anarchist tradition has been represented by histories of anarchism, and how these representations reproduced racial biases because of their eurocentrism and modernist structure. The need for an antiracist analysis of the anarchist canon, and new concepts beyond the old concepts of continents is felt. This leads to discussing Third World anarchisms, not as exotic movements in exotic places or simple applications of anarchist ideas produced in Europe but as unique anarchist experiments, informed by particular perspectives, and part of the global network. I favor the idea that contrary to the standard accounts, anarchism is not an idea founded by Proudhon or Bakunin and then carried to other places; rather, anarchism is a certain set of ideas and practices formed with and through a specific network of radical reformists/revolutionaries in different parts of the world. Anarchism is multi-centred, fluid, and it operates through temporary centres – hubs, extra functioning nodes of a network. And in describing the history of anarchism, it is this movement that historians need to capture.

### **Eurocentrism in Anarchist Histories**

To understand and then to dismantle Eurocentrism in anarchist histories, Dipesh Chakrabarty's description of Eurocentrism in history may be helpful. Chakrabarty states that, "Insofar as the academic discourse of history - that is, 'history' as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university - is concerned, 'Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call 'Indian', 'Chinese', 'Kenyan', and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called 'the history' of Europe... Only 'Europe', the argument would appear to be, is theoretically (ie., at the level of the fundamental categories that shape historical thinking) knowable; all other histories are matters of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton which is substantially 'Europe'" (Chakrabarty 1994, 342-4). This is perfectly observable in the conceptualization of anarchist history where historians see European anarchism as the only anarchism that is theoretically knowable! We need an anarchist history that gets rid of such a central theoretical skeleton.

Work on anarchisms in China, Egypt, Japan, Argentina or Mexico is considered to meet a specific interest in different cultures, requiring additional learning about these cultures, their political history, context, and problems. And this knowledge is not considered essential to any study but necessary only for the

particular (even exotic) area. For example, 'an expert on anarchism' (say someone working on classical anarchism like George Crowder) does not necessarily have to know anything about the Chinese revolution of 1911 but is expected to know about the French revolution of 1789. The same goes for anarchist movements. You need to study Chinese anarchism only if you are working on a case study, like anarchism in China, but you do not need to study Chinese anarchism if you want to study say, the history of anarcha-feminism. You can write a whole tome on 'gender politics in anarchism' without reading a single page on the gender politics of Shifu, Osugi or Kotoku. And you won't face any criticism about this lack in subsequent reviews.

How does this work? How come the history of a genuinely anti-colonialist movement came to be shaped like this? And why is it that the same perspective continues to dominate still?

Historians of anarchism were not intentionally Eurocentric, culturally or spatially elitist. This is one of the main difficulties you face when you try to challenge Eurocentrism: it is not a "sort of prejudice, an 'attitude,' and therefore something that can be eliminated from modern enlightened thought in the same way we eliminate other relic attitudes such as racism, sexism and religious bigotry" (Blaut 1993, 9). Eurocentrism lies in the very logic of Western scholarship. Historians of anarchism set out to write good, well-crafted accounts of a theory and a movement. And they adopted the most respected historical approaches of their times. Yet these were deeply Eurocentric and they fit the model of established world histories. Lewis and Wigen note:

By the early 1800s, most Western historians had convinced themselves that only Europeans could really be said to possess history ... by the mid-nineteenth century, Eurocentrism had so intensified that it was common for world historians simply to brush away the rest of the world in a few opening passages ... By the early twentieth century, the equation of world history with European history had become normative in Western scholarship ... (Lewis & Wigen 1997, 106-108)

## **Europe**

The difficulty of making up a convenient barrier between Europe and Asia was first solved by imagining a division that stretches from the Don, Volga, Kama and Ob rivers. But in the eighteenth-century, a Swedish military officer, Philipp-Johann von Strahlenberg argued that the Ural Mountains should form the barrier between Europe and Asia. Von Strahlenberg's proposal was enthusiastically

seconded by Russian intellectuals associated with Peter the Great's Westernization program, particularly Vasilii Nikitich Tatishchev, in large part because of its ideological convenience. In highlighting the Ural divide, Russian Westernizers could at once emphasize the European nature of the historical Russian core while consigning Siberia to the position of an alien Asian realm suitable for colonial rule and exploitation (Lewis-Wigen 1997, 27).

So categorizing Russian anarchists as a part of European anarchism had its roots in Peter the Great, and an 'otherization' of Siberia -- a place which could have played an inspiring role in the anarchisms of both Bakunin and Kropotkin. Of course, rather than speculating on the Siberian roots of anarchism, my real intention is to show the contingencies, and historical ideological struggles behind geographical terms that have been taken for granted and used to locate a core for anarchism. Even dividing Europe and Asia along a North-South rather than an East-West axis is convention. In fact, "by scientific criteria ... in physical terms, Siberia has much more in common with the far north of Europe than with Oman or Cambodia" (Lewis & Wigen 1997, 31). Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* also explicitly includes his observations as a geographer in Siberia.

### **European History as World History**

The type of Eurocentrism buried in the above mentioned conception is not very different from what appears in general world histories: "By the early 1800s, most Western historians had convinced themselves that only Europeans could really be said to possess history.... by the mid-nineteenth century, Eurocentrism had so intensified that it was common for world historians simply to brush away the rest of the world in a few opening passages...By the early twentieth century, the equation of world history with European history had become normative in Western scholarship" (Lewis & Wigen 1997, 106-108). The problem in the anarchist canon is not only that it excludes particular figures or movements; the problem is the historical framework that anarchism is forced to fit. Existing mainstream anarchist historiography is not only blind to non-Western elements of historical anarchism, it also misses the very nature of fin de siècle world radicalism in which the anarchism of the period was flourishing: i.e., globalization (and if you prefer, alter-globalization, as an alternative to the central globalization of European imperialism) (See Khuri-Makdisi 2003; Anderson 2005). Instead of being interested in the network of (anarchist) radicalism (worldwide), political historiography tries to build a linear narration which begins from a described geography, a cultural framework, which will be led by father figures, and which will have decisive moments to compartmentalize, (like the 'loss' of Spain) and a traceable life span.

So the real problem is the missing intersections, radical networks of the world cities, exchanges, overlaps, flows, nodes, linkages: fluidity and multiplicity.

Anarchism was a radical phenomenon flowing within these world networks (and one of the main ingredients in forming these radical networks). When anarchism was being carried from one place to another, it was not an export or a missionary transport of an idea to be experimented with somewhere else; it was not the practice of an original idea in an alien environment, rather it was characteristically a combination of ideas and practices constantly reshaped in various locations according to local problems, local priorities and local conditions, without losing the international, global linkages that kept them within the range of (anarchist) radicalism, always with “very local claims” (Khuri-Makdisi 2003).

Missing this view of the international networks helps to explain why the role of arts is also missed in most of the histories of anarchism -- because these networks always included writers and art initiatives (like theatre in Alexandria: see Khuri-Makdisi 2003).

Anarchism was a worldwide radicalism, made up of internationally connected networks of world cities and ideas, movements, periodicals, intellectuals, militants and workers. And this network was not an exclusively European network as suggested by historians like Joll or Woodcock, but a truly international, truly global network. A concept of “Europe as the founder” is applied to a much more horizontal existence.

And when an anarchist or an anarchist periodical or an idea or a form of practice was being moved from one city to another city in another country, there was actually no origin or an idea of origin. All applications were equally local, and locally concerned, thus different in details, and all applications were original and a part of the origin, and all were simultaneously founding, as they were the part of the founding international world network of anarchist politics. An Italian anarchist publishing an anarchist periodical in Cairo was not exporting Italian (European) anarchism to Egypt, but anarchism was being founded and simultaneously experimented worldwide by Italians and natives and immigrants and others in different parts of the world. Anarchism is not the thing that was shipped from a city of origin; it is all these shipments, connections, relations, exchanges, intersections. It is this global network, which also extends the limits of the sphere of politics.

As an extension to the ‘defeat of anarchism theory’, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi suggests another defeat: the historiographic ‘defeat’ of anarchism worldwide “by organized and party-centred interpretations of the left, namely socialism and communism” (Khuri-Makdisi 2003, 179). So Khuri-Makdisi here is not talking about the so-called ‘defeat’ (which she writes in single quote, probably for this ‘defeat’ was not really a defeat) that happened in Russia when anarchism couldn’t lead a revolution (as suggested by James Joll) and couldn’t stop the

communists and silence them for good, or in Spain when Franco won the war (as suggested by Woodcock) but the defeat that happened during a process of historiography. How can we turn 'this defeat' of anarchism back by focusing on historiography? Khuri-Makdisi detects how the history of the left in the Arab countries traditionally starts with party centred socialist efforts and thus dismisses earlier anarchist networks and their actions (Khuri-Makdisi 2003, 179, 179n4). And additionally, she claims this was accompanied with a discrimination of historiography against the role of artisans in the history of the left (Khuri-Makdisi 2003, 179n4). Next to Khuri-Makdisi, we see Lewis Perry, as the final argument of his book *Radical Abolitionism*, claiming that there was another historiographical defeat of anarchism at the hands of the Marxist left. Perry reminds us of the motivations of Marx to move the International from London to New York (just to snatch the International from Bakuninist anarchists) and in New York, how he eliminated the anarchist abolitionists like Woodhull and West from the movement, leaving them forgotten as a result, as Tolstoy discovered, a dozen years later, when he tried to find traces of abolitionist radicalism (Perry 1973, 294).

And we shouldn't forget: the importance of international linkages for today's (anarchist) anti-globalization movement operates at the same high level.

### **World Anarchism / Global Anarchism**

Anarchists of the world have been creating solidarity with anti-colonial, global resistance movements and various forms of Third World insurrections without asking if they call themselves anarchist or not. Thus, as seen in Anderson, Spanish anarchists supported movements in the Philippines and Cuba (Anderson 2005). Italian anarchists created a free school in Alexandria (Khuri-Makdisi 2003). Contemporary anarchism of the anti-globalization era also embraced world resistance movements against the global capitalist system. Thus the anti-globalization movement included "indigenous peoples' organisations": anarchist activists joined Zapatistas internationally or they supported movements in India and elsewhere (Bowen-Purkis 2004, 2).

Global anarchist encounters shaped this dimension. Kotoku's interest in anarchism started thorough his correspondence with a Californian anarchist, Albert Johnson. (Kotoku was exchanging letters with Kropotkin too.) Johnson sent many anarchist books and pictures to Kotoku. Their relationships are nice examples of travelling anarchists and of the flow of documents and ideas. After his release from prison in 1905, Kotoku set off for San Francisco, stayed there for seven months, saw Johnson, studied the radical ideas of the Bay Area, and added the concept of 'direct action' to his anarchism (which came from the Industrial Workers of the World) (Wright 1971, 126). This is actually how classical anarchism was formed – not as something coming from an origin and being

imitated or applied everywhere else but as something that emerges with and through a network of peoples, ideas, movements (deeds, direct actions) and publications. A letter comes from San Francisco to Tokyo; a Japanese radical goes to jail. Then he is released and travels to San Francisco himself. Italian anarchists in Alexandria are engaged in an anarchistic free school project or propagandising to Italian workers there. A Japanese anarchist (Osugi) in St. Denis is addressing demonstrators and trying to convince them to make demonstrations in the central region of Paris. Exiles everywhere: Russians, French, Italians... Ideas challenged with local problems, always local concerns. There is no one big theory that everyone tries to apply in their own region, but a floating plate of theories and practices all re-evaluating new conditions in new places with new traditions sharing the anarchist enthusiasm. That was the global circuit of anarchism. And it requires a different conceptualization to understand this complex organizational network that cuts across borders. In the global network of classical anarchism, Tokyo, Paris, Buenos Aires, Alexandria, Geneva, San Francisco were all interrelated nodes. Emma Goldman meeting Flores Magon, John Kenneth Turner from California, meeting and corresponding with Kropotkin, and countless such anarchist connections, encounters... Reading the existing anarchist canon, one gets the impression that some writers exchanged ideas about deep human problems, formulated a new ideology named anarchism, and then the activists applied these theories in the rest of the world. While in fact, the theory and practice were being shaped together, and through face to face relations, real travelling, and the movement of published material, and also letters, formed the basis for the emergence of such a movement.

Bowen and Purkis say that for them it is "self-evident that anarchist activities are constantly occurring throughout the world and do so without any knowledge of 'official' anarchist history" (Bowen-Purkis 2004, 6). This is an interesting comment about the gap we have between the 'anarchism of the official anarchist history' and 'anarchism that keeps anarchism alive throughout the world'. This gap causes several problems. First of all, contemporary anarchists usually fail to see the 'mediators' (history tellers), and instead of rejecting certain historical approaches and certain historians of anarchism, they take these as given (i.e. without reflection they take these representations of the past as the past itself) and reject the 'classical anarchism' that this official historiography presents. We may argue that Woodcock created more harm than good when he created the category of 'new anarchism' as a totally new and different type of anarchism from the 'classical anarchism' of the earlier generation, especially when he coupled this with a false history which declared the death of anarchism and the defeat of his fellow anarchists in London. Instead of facing the possibility of his false periodization, he worked on this concept of new anarchism. We are still suffering from it. This problem reaches its epitome in chapters on anarchism in textbooks on political ideology, where for example writers claim that anarcha-feminism is a current in anarchism that appeared

during the 1970s as a part of the 'new anarchism' or the 'New Left' ignoring all the central role of anarcha-feminism in the so-called classical period and history of anarchism. Anarchism has always incorporated sexuality effectively.

### **Cross-Cultural and Cross-Continental Networks**

Global anarchism with “all of its cross-cultural and cross-continental networks” (Bowen-Purkis 2004, 213) is not really depicted in existing histories of anarchism. This is true not only of the past but also in discussions of today’s anarchism. The rise of the anti-globalization movement, for example, attracted a worldwide network of movements and activists. Many people date the “inception of the anti-globalization movement to the uprising of the Zapatistas in 1994 ... Direct action in the global North has drawn on techniques of resistance and nonviolent civil disobedience invented in the global South from tree-hugging to Gandhian-style direct action against corporations” (Goaman 2004, 173; See also Katsiaticas 2004).

The global anarchist movement always included numerous encounters, flows of ideas and people. And because there is no one central leadership in anarchism, these connections played an important role for all participant anarchists in shaping their own anarchisms. We can give endless examples of these interconnections. For example Landauer, throughout the 1890s, “made the acquaintance of many of Europe's best known anarchists: Kropotkin, Nettlau, Rocker, Malatesta, Louise Michel and Elisee Reclus” (Kuhn 2010, 25). Li Shizeng, founder of the World Society in Paris, converted to anarchism as a consequence of his close relationship with the family of Elisée Reclus, Hua Lin met Kropotkin in London in the 1910s. A life-long association between Emma Goldman and Bajin emerged. Chinese anarchists in France had relations with Jean Grave (Dirlik 1991, 25). In the 1920s, “as anarchists in Fujian (China) prepared for a rural insurrection, they were joined by anarchists from Japan and Korea who believed that Fujian could serve as the base for an East Asian anarchist insurrection” (Dirlik 1991, 26). As Gavin Brown (2007) notes, in anarchism ideas travel as inspiration and invitation, rather than command.

### **Canon – The Logic of Exclusions and Inclusions**

The logic of exclusion makes the possibility of inclusion seem absurd. For example, in the rare cases where Emma Goldman is mentioned, she tends to be reduced to a figure who did not actually contribute to anarchist political theory and its ethos, but who added only a 'feminist' flavour to anarchism. She is marked as the 'mother' of the anarcha-feminist brand, while the fantastic seven anarchists are hailed as the 'fathers' of the 'anarchist nation' whose roots are in Europe, the 'motherland' (cf. Greenway 1997).

A direct result of these exclusions from the canon can be observed when the anarchist position on human nature, anarchist understandings of Nietzsche, or anarchist positions regarding revolution, Enlightenment or education are discussed: Emma Goldman is missing! Goldman is there, in the history of anarchism, but remembered only in a section on anarcha-feminism. And even here, the categorization contains another secret, second level of reduction, a reduction based on the reading of anarchist feminism with reference to one particular iconic woman and her life (cf. Greenway 2010; Weiss-Kensinger 2007). In the anarchist canon, Goldman is easily depicted as a woman whose adventurous love and life story is more important than her ideas. A way to minimize the significance of women anarchists is to deny that they were theoreticians so as to reduce their practices to simple – though in her case apparently 'muddled' – applications of the theories of great men. Emma Goldman in this sense has been largely interpreted as a follower and even 'disciple' of Kropotkin (McKenzie –Stalbaum 2007).

Although Goldman was “one of the most radical feminists of her era” and “a leading figure in the international anarchist movement between 1889 and 1940” she has been largely ignored as a theoretician, and never seen as an original thinker (Weiss-Kensinger-Carroll 2007, 5-7). “When we take someone like Goldman seriously, the canon itself shifts a bit” (Weiss-Kensinger-Carroll 2007, 16).

Jim Jose makes a similar observation in his article “‘Nowhere at Home’, Not Even in Theory: Emma Goldman, Anarchism and Political Theory,” when he points out the reluctance in the history of political thought to “accord Emma Goldman the status of a serious political thinker. Even within the anarchist tradition she is rarely acknowledged as a political theorist” (Jose 2005, 23). Jose reminds us how she was unfairly excluded from the historiography of anarchism by offering a string of examples:

... when Marshall acknowledged that Goldman 'made a lasting contribution to anarchist theory by giving it a feminist dimension', he still described her as more of an activist than a thinker. In Solomon's view, Goldman was not, however, an 'original theorist', but rather more 'an interpreter and propagandist of anarchism'. As if to underline this, one well-reviewed discussion of anarchist theory (Ritter, 1980) does not even consider Goldman's ideas. And a decade later, Crowder's study of the so-called 'founding fathers', Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, barely gave Goldman a mention (Crowder 1991). (Jose 2005, 25)

Jose successfully establishes the contrary: that, as matter of fact “Goldman's contribution to political thought was both original and pivotal” (Jose 2005, 23).

The exclusion of female anarchists is apparent in popular accounts of anarchism, too. Reviewing Clifford Harper's *Anarchy: a Graphic Guide*, Martyn Everett observes that Harper used "the standard historical texts on anarchism, the standard theorists, the known activists and set them within a narrative framework," yet "women anarchists don't feature as much as they should. Louise Michel, Lilian Wolfe and Marie Louise Berneri, Molly Witcop and Maria Silva, are all conspicuous by their inexplicable absence" (Everett 1993, 73). On the other hand, the (visual) "depiction of women in assertive and revolutionary roles is one of the book's innovations and stands in contrast to the weakness of the text" (Everett 1993, 73). This 'textual exclusion' and 'graphical inclusion' of women anarchists is in line with the common acceptance of the unique value of Emma Goldman's life, which is full of adventures and crowned with more than five biographies (Wehling 2007) accompanying the widespread reluctance to recognizing her intellectual and theoretical achievements.

In sum, the anarchist canon ignores women anarchists, queer anarchists, (anarcha-feminism and queer anarchism), anarchist artists and art genres all of which played a significant role in the history of anarchism and non-European/non-Western anarchisms/anarchists. It is time to argue that their qualities have been an essential part of what anarchism is and what it stands for and that their relation with the form they chose for organising reflects their inner qualities.

For anarchists like Milstein, this interest in form runs counter to the reduction of anarchism to anti-statism which follows Eltzbacher's system of classification.

Defending process and form, Milstein writes:

Anarchism's generalized critique of hierarchy and domination, even more than its anticapitalism and antistatism, sets it apart from any other political philosophy. It asserts that every instance of vertical and/or centralized power over others should be reconstituted to enact horizontal and/or decentralized power together. (Milstein 2010, 39-40)

Milstein's assertion reminds us that anti-statism is not the main axis in anarchism and that decentralization and horizontalism are decisive. Anti-hierarchy and anti-domination are the vital principles for anarchists and they open up different, multiple and fluid sites for resistance and engagement. Milstein adds: "the work of anarchism takes place everywhere, every day, from within the body politics to the body itself" (Milstein 2010, 41).

What defines anarchism is not so much a position against the state form but a politicized ethics towards life. Thus, anarchist politics is never pragmatic but

always prefigurative. Anarchism “keeps this vigilant voice constantly at its center, as its core mission” asking “what is right?” “What is the right thing to do?” (Milstein 2010, 47). On this account anarchism is ‘the’ political philosophy that defines all these areas excluded from the canon as parts of the political and which distinguishes itself from other political philosophies by insisting on this.

If “the canon shifts a bit” when we “take someone like Goldman seriously” then when we take all women, Third World anarchists, forms of anarchist art works and anarchist organisations and movements, queer movements and queer anarchists, anarchist body politics and cultural politics seriously the canon would shift more than a bit. It would be like an earthquake and a series of fragmentations and cracks, leading to reorganizations and regroupings.

Anarchism as a whole has a peculiar emphasis on 'form': on the form of organisations, movements, societies, processes, arts, relationships, and on the much discussed 'anarchistic form', the form that may represent the anarchist principle, the form that is shaped according to the 'ethical compass' of anarchism. And the result is and was mainly a network-like, rhizomatic form which is influenced by the very values of anarchism and its principle of prefigurative politics; anarchism has never been in favour of 'formlessness', as Gustav Landauer would remind us (cf. Cohn 2010).

Richard Day's emphasis on the 'newest social movements' focuses on “those struggles that seek change to the root, that want to address not just the content of current modes of domination and exploitation, but also the forms that gave rise to them. Thus, for example, rather than seeking pay equity for men and women, a radical feminism works for the elimination of patriarchy in all of its forms...” (Day 2005, 4). Even anti-statism is an emphasis on form: instead of claiming that the content of political power (who runs it) would solve our problems of freedom and equality, anarchists argue that the form of the political power (state) will continue to be the problem even if the content changes. So anarchists aim to change the form of political power both practically and culturally. Besides, reducing anarchism to anti-statism has been the source of many exclusions because the state is understood in a narrow way in these conceptions. If the state is understood in the way Gustav Landauer famously put it, as “a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to one another,” then anti-statism would cover all forms of domination and hierarchy, and all fields of life.

Landauer's anarchism “revolves more around 'leaving the state' than 'crushing it'” (Kuhn 2010, 25). In Erich Mühsam's words “Landauer never saw anarchism as a politically or organizationally limited doctrine, but as an expression of ordered freedom in thought and action ... His revolutionary activity was never limited to the fight against state laws and social systems. It concerned all dimensions of

life" (Kuhn 2010, 25). 'Ordered freedom' is an important element of this formulation, because anarchism shapes freedom, favours a certain freedom, which is ordered, according to the anarchist ethical compass, and daily anarchism is 'an expression' of it. Or rather, a form of expression, or an expression of a form. Landauer, also like Osugi and Goldman, "seemed ever more convinced that social change remained unattainable without the 'inner' change of the individual ... 'revolution' as a permanent historical struggle for socialism, tied into the renewal of spirit, individuality, and community" (Kuhn 2010, 26).

Forms are important for anarchism because 'means must be consistent with ends'. Prefigurative politics directly links us to forms. That is why the type of organisation, the form, its organisational principle can be its ideology in anarchism: because the means (forms) must be consistent with ends (utopias). Anarchistic forms are 'utopic'. And that makes them also experimental – because utopia is a place of experiments according to certain principles. And anarchistic principles are used as the ethical compass in anarchism. Thus, artistic experiments with forms, counter-cultural experiments with forms of organization and life are crucial to understand what anarchism is. And anarchism's 'political theory' thus includes 'experiments with forms' – because these experiments are really among the places where anarchists discuss anarchistic principles.

We saw that the extent of the artistic and cultural movements which engaged with anarchism were voluminous; and more importantly, they were highly engaged in daily anarchist politics. The currents in the neglected artistic circles were not different to those in the 'political' movement. Thus, anarchism has been a movement that brings a new definition to what 'political' is, and that contribution has been excluded by existing mainstream histories of anarchism that maintain a separation of the political and artistic and daily/personal life. The concern with the limits of sexual freedom has been central to the 'politics' of the anarchist movement. The extent to which sexual politics is and always has been integral to anarchist struggles illustrated this character of anarchism thoroughly. And it takes us to a central point about form that ties directly to the canon and its exclusions. We saw that a re-writing of the anarchist past does not merely require a widening of the canon but needs a challenge to its logics, and its 'form'.

### **Anarchism as an Alternative Modernism**

Arif Dirlik rightly underlines the Chinese anarchists' relations with modernity, arguing that Chinese anarchism was "bound up from the beginning with an incipient revolutionary discourse that was ultimately the product of China's confrontation with the modern world, and anarchists were to play some part in the formulation of that discourse" (Dirlik 1991, 3). More importantly, Dirlik pointed

out that Marxism shared a modern culture with capitalism which anarchism rejected:

... an unwavering commitment to modernism (a unilinear view of history and its material basis in industrial and technological progress), which is characteristic of mainstream Marxism and most certainly of existing socialist states, makes for a blindness to contemporary questions related to ecology, community and alienation, which may no longer be blamed simply on capitalism, but are products of a modern culture of which Marxism partakes. (Dirlik 1991, 9)

The modern culture mainstream Marxism and capitalism share and anarchism opposes is a key aspect of anarchism. Anarchism has links with all kinds of currents opposing dominant modernity, from romanticism to primitivism. Anarchism takes its part within the larger network of alternative modernities. The 'rational' dominant modernity anarchism opposes is best described in Scott's book *Seeing Like A State* (1998).

Where does the anarchist project begin? According to James Bowen, the anarchist project begins in the 'constructive effort', when anarchists make a "change in our relationships with each other, institutions, technology and our environment ... the boring, small-scale, mundane business of making positive, non-alienated relationships with our friends and neighbours and remaining open to new people and ideas" (Bowen 2004, 119). In the Landauerian fashion, when anarchists reject the dominant ways of relating to each other in a way that creates or re-creates state-forms they go for alternative, experimental forms of relating to each other, our environment, technology, our past and institutions. This makes the constructive aspects of anarchism significant. This is a stand Colin Ward worked hard on in his own studies and also by articles published in *Anarchy* during his editorship (Shantz 2010; Ward 1973; Ward 1987).

There will be no single beginning, point of origin for anarchism. It was not born from a certain father in a certain motherland at a certain birth date. There is no birth certificate for anarchism. No figuration. Anarchism which has no beginning nor any end. Always in the middle. Always on the network. The network-like, rhizomatic structure of anarchism is our model and inspiration in imagining an alternative history of anarchism.

Anarchism is "probably best described as a multi-tendency movement of movements ... different tendencies within anarchism co-exist in complex, if sometimes strained, relationships of mutual engagement" (Shantz 2010, 17). Anarchism is about doing politics differently – it is about working consciously with

respect, dignity and purpose with others and without hierarchies or permanent leaders to help our (individual and collective) selves (Brown 2007).

The historiographic method used to write the history of anarchism should also be chosen according to anarchist principles and based on an anarchistic understanding of form. An anarchist history should be aware of the problem of representation in any given history, and being anti-representationalist, anarchists should know that no history can represent the anarchist past as it is.

Anarchism as a movement does not permit a tyrannical univocal voice of the Party, The Leader, The Programme or The Ideology. Rather the “voice is always that distilled from the combined experience of the momentary focus, the lexia one presently reads, and the continually forming narrative of one’s reading path” (Landow 1997, 36). This makes some believe that there is no one single anarchism but anarchisms, because every single anarchist forms his/her own anarchist narrative by following his/her own path. In this sense, people who think anarchism is not coherent or it is difficult to describe anarchism because it has so many different even conflicting currents ignore the ‘web’, the ‘anarchist space’, where all individual anarchists and anarchist currents have their own paths, linked to each other intentionally to create anarchism, a coherent ideology in the sense that it is a coherent understanding of form shared by various linked nodes in a non-hierarchical way according to an ethical compass.

By developing alternative practices “through social forums and other networks and organizations, contemporary anarchists are challenging dominant practices and simultaneously escaping oppression” (Morland 2004, 36). Similarly, alternative practices of writing anarchist history challenge dominant practices of history-writing and help us escape Eurocentric, colonial and gendered ways of thinking. For that, as Ward notes, we “have to build networks instead of pyramids” (Ward 1973, 22) (See Network Structure of Hypertexts in Links). In establishing “sites of resistance, activists, including those allied to the anti-capitalist movement, are simultaneously undermining dominant or major discourses of power” (Morland 2004, 37).

We can also argue that contemporary anarchism’s attitude towards the history of anarchism is totally in line with the deconstructive consciousness towards history. When contemporary anarchists decide to act anarchistically, they do not follow the logic offered in representative books on anarchism: instead they tend to define anarchism (coherently in this regard) as an elusive concept. Anarchism is not defined by anti-globalization movement activists, as a theory of a few Western men to be applied worldwide, not as a theory to be applied in general, but as an attitude, an approach to life and politics, a form of alternative practices, or rather, an understanding of form. Anarchism is characterized by its “opposition to all forms of power, not just political or eco-

nomic" (Bowen & Purkis 2004, 7). And this results in engaging with alternative practices to create alternative forms in opposition to all forms of power. Anarchism both creates them and also keeps them connected.

Colin Ward reminds us that "anarchism is the ultimate decentralization" (Ward 1987, 12) and if we want to decenter the history of anarchism as well, this cannot be done only by adding new names to the canon – it can be fulfilled by changing the form of the canon and representation in general, changing its pyramidal form and axial structure into a horizontal, network-like, rhizomatic narrative.

### **What if the Canon Shifts a Bit More?**

What if the canon shifts a bit more and opens space for prominent Third World anarchists like Osugi Sakae, for example?

Kropotkin, Sorel, Bergson (through Sorel probably), Stirner and Nietzsche were among the influences on Osugi (Stanley 1982, 61-62): "He did 'accept the "superman" who transcended his limitations through his own will power'" (Stanley 1982, 62). His individualism was very different than the Tucker-style 'classical individualism'; Osugi described a psychological individualism, a social individualism, and a third form of individualism which was "a fusion of psychological individualism and social individualism" (Stanley 1982, 63). In his theory of individualism, the individual "was linked to society through syndicalism" (Stanley 1982, 64). Also, "Osugi remained skeptical of the final goal of the social revolution and refused to state explicitly what the final goal was; instead, he implied that a parallel existed between a movement and its goals, energy and action, thought and act" (Stanley 1982, 70). Adding Osugi to the core of anarchism would definitely change the meaning of anarchist individualism.

Osugi Sakae sees 'anarchist defeat' from a different perspective as well. Osugi defines what anarchists gain from a 'defeat' in a strike using terms of pleasure:

We are often defeated in a strike. However, no matter how often beaten, we cannot forget the joy we felt during the dispute. The pleasure of stretching our will power. The pleasure of trying out our own strength. The pleasure of seeing a manifestation of real comradely emotions among comrades. The pleasure of seeing the world clearly split into camps of foes and friends... The pleasure of seeing an improvement in our own personalities. (Stanley 1982, 118)

Osugi's Kropotkinian – Sorelean – Sorelean / Bergsonian – Stirnerite – Nietzschean anarchism definitely did not share the defeat/success dilemma of later anarchist historians. For Daniel Guérin for example, the defeat "of the Spanish Revolution

deprived anarchism of its only foothold in the world" (Guerin 1970, 144). On the contrary, Osugi could argue that the Spanish Revolution "still gives us the pleasure of stretching our will power".

Osugi Sakae's anarchism "was not concerned exclusively with society and its organizational reform: it focused equally on the perfection of the individual by the individual's own action; by that means society too would be perfected" (Stanley 1982, xi). For Osugi, like Goldman, the personal was political already. His relations with Emma Goldman's politics would probably have been more extensive, had he known her better. The only difference between the two is that while Goldman was practising her theories relatively 'freely', Osugi was stabbed by one of the three women he was supposed to be in a 'free love' relationship with!

To remember the strength of the idea of world anarchism let's take the case of Esperanto. Esperanto was embraced by many world anarchists as the language to be used in the global network of anarchism. It was a choice against the hierarchy of languages. Shifu for example saw the "Esperanto movement as an essential part of the worldwide people's revolution he sought to advance" (Krebs 1998,111). Tolstoy was also an Esperantist. There was a "high degree of overlap between anarchism and the Esperanto movement in Europe" (Krebs 1998, 111). Shifu's "devotion to the Esperanto movement reflected his vision of a supranationalist anarchist society in the future" (Krebs 1998, 114). Osugi was an Esperantist as well (Krebs 1998, 242 n4).

Richard Day notes that we can think of Gustav Landauer as "one of the first post-anarchists, inasmuch as he read Nietzsche anarchistically" (Day 2010, 8). Gabriel Kuhn and Siegbert Wolf, in their introduction to Gustav Landauer's collection of political writings, also emphasize Landauer's early novel *Der Todesprediger* (*Preacher of Death*, 1893) and how it is "notable for an early libertarian adaptation of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, so characteristic of 1960s and '70s French poststructuralism and of contemporary 'postanarchist' theory" (Kuhn 2010, 21). Arif Dirlik sees parallels between the post-cultural revolution interest in anarchism in China and a post-May '68 interest to anarchism in Europe (Dirlik 1991, 7; see also Welsh 1981). Ursula K. Le Guin wrote her three 'postmodern anarchist novels' between 1969 and 1974, during a "vitally important historical moment in the anarchist tradition" (Call 2007, 88). In a radio programme broadcast months before May '68, on January 10th and 30th 1968, Colin Ward says "there is a certain anarchy in the air today" (Ward 1987, 22). In a history of anarchism, in representations of anarchism, we need to see this 'anarchy in the air'. In that sense we can think of Emma Goldman and Osugi Sakae as early postanarchists too, which means, if we rewrite anarchist history and place Goldman, Landauer and Osugi in the canon, classical anarchists would be the first postanarchists! Reminding us, once again, of the

possible important consequences of the making of the canon and how we should be aware of the previous makings of the canon. How will we shift the canon when we add De Sade, Goldman, Fourier, Landauer, Osugi to the core?

As Gabriel Kuhn notes, “Landauer sees Paul Eltzbacher's scientific classifications [in his *Anarchism: A History of Ideas of its Classical Currents*] as directly opposed to anarchy's inherent diversity, fluctuation, and openness” (Kuhn 2010, 302). In a letter to Paul Eltzbacher, dated 2 April 1900, Landauer wrote: “Some of your definitions I consider too strict in fact, particularly in the last part of your book. See more commonality among the different schools of anarchism. You, like all men of science, overestimate the word and fail to see what is essential, namely the unspeakable, the mood, that which is not easily measured” (Kuhn 2010, 302-303). Dave Morland suggests that “when situated alongside the practices of new social movements associated with the recent anticapitalist protests, the poststructuralist perspective affords insight into how new modes of anarchist practice are emerging” (Morland 2004, 24). We should see the continuity between these new modes of anarchist practice and old modes of anarchist practice in an account of anarchism. A history of anarchism needs to work on this mood of anarchism, this ‘unspeakable’. We are trying to make the ‘unspeakable’ anarchist past speak for itself, and when this is impossible or when we cannot manage to accomplish this task, we aim to keep the process transparent. Thus, we need to be subjective to reach an objective story, in an indirect way. The ‘imaginal force and visions’ of anarchism that characterize the movement requires such a vigour (Shantz 2010, 20). The ‘unspeakable,’ which Landauer sees as unifying the anarchist schools, corresponds with what I have called the anarchist ethical compass. Hypertext facilitates an awareness of this unspeakable connection because it gets away from representational accounts and captures the complexity, openness and plurality because it is actively creative.

Elizabeth D. Ermarth shows the importance of the introduction of perspective in the development of modern empirical science and in the growth of representational politics and historical explanation (Ermarth 2010, 324).

Conventional historical narrative provides a perspective system in order to mediate all contradiction (Ermarth 2010, 336). The perspective system is similar to a pyramidal system, and the mediation of anarchist contradictions has been achieved by explaining anarchism as a collection of contradictions. Anarchism, historians of anarchism widely argue, is so deeply contradictory in all its aspects and so deeply incoherent that we can call its nature ‘contradictory’: thus they are mediating anarchism in an anarchonormativity of history. Instead I would like to suggest that any historian of anarchism has to capture the coherence in the ‘unspeakable’, and in the ‘anarchist mood’. This requires an intuition, but a shared one.

The only way to define what the anarchist mood or the anarchist ethical compass is, is to embrace anarchism as a way of thinking and that this way of thinking is expressed in forms of action or organisation and this constitutes the anarchist ideology – in all its multiplicity.

## Endnotes

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