Introduction [to Continuum Companion to Anarchism]

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Part I
Research on Anarchism
Introduction

Ruth Kinna

Twenty years ago the task of compiling a research guide to anarchism would have been a more straightforward task than it is today. In his introduction to *For Anarchism*, published in 1989, David Goodway argued that anarchism – theory, practice and history – was only just emerging from the periphery. New currents in Britain, Canada and North America indicated that anarchism was beginning to shake off the debris it had acquired from the scrap heap to which it had been consigned. Yet anarchist research still attracted little attention outside anarchist circles and, as he has argued more recently, even in areas where anarchism was a significant influence – in literature, music, art – it struggled to gain intellectual currency or achieve prominence in public debates. Goodway perhaps overlooked some important niches of anarchist research activity, but the picture he painted captured the marginalization of anarchist studies and the failure of mainstream research to engage with anarchism. The neglect was obvious in socialist history, where leading historians simultaneously acknowledged the significant part that anarchists had played in radical movements across the world but nevertheless wrote anarchism out of the modern struggle.

In the last 20 years the volume of work in anarchist studies has grown substantially. The range of disciplinary territories over which anarchists now roam has expanded and interest in anarchist research has grown in parallel. Indeed, whereas researchers once shunned anarchism for say, Marxism (Goodway suggests reasons to do with the lack of tangible reward, anarchist anti-intellectualism and bias against theory) more now seem willing to engage with it. To be sure, the ‘a’ word still presents problems in research cultures, but anarchism has a foothold in art history, anthropology, pedagogy, utopian studies and researchers working in the field have made significant contributions to film and social movement studies, to work on feminism, gender and sexuality, cultural studies and contemporary political theory. New avenues are being opened up in sociology and the influence of anarchist ideas is beginning to be felt in economics, criminology and law. And the questions prompted by this body of research are not just about historical movements – though the important task of documenting anarchist activity continues – but about the
relationship of anarchism to contemporary activism and anarchist approaches to political, economic, cultural and social issues. What place does anarchism occupy in, for instance, the horizontal politics of global protest movements\textsuperscript{19} or in community organizing?\textsuperscript{20} Or, by reverse, what can anarchists learn from the experience of groups struggling against the exploitative trade practices of neo-liberalism?\textsuperscript{21} How might anarchist practices be developed, nurtured and applied in everyday relations to challenge existing institutions and institutional behaviours?\textsuperscript{22} What does anarchist thought teach about the ways in which academic disciplines – international relations,\textsuperscript{23} terrorism studies\textsuperscript{24} – have developed? How does contemporary political theory help us probe, critique, revise and develop anarchist thought;\textsuperscript{25} how can it help sharpen anarchist conceptions of ethics\textsuperscript{26} or freedom,\textsuperscript{27} democracy\textsuperscript{28} or the analysis of violence?\textsuperscript{29} How can anarchist approaches to law, authority and punishment help inform the development of social policy in areas like homelessness or the arbitration of justice?\textsuperscript{30} In what ways does anarchism intersect with other traditions of thought – religious thinking,\textsuperscript{31} labour organizing\textsuperscript{32} – or any organizing?\textsuperscript{33} All these are the subjects of current research, but they by no means exhaust it.\textsuperscript{34}

The first aim of this collection is to illustrate the scope and depth of research in anarchist studies. The second is to provide a guide to resources useful to further work. In pursuit of the first aim, the collection includes a series of short discussions which focus on approaches to research and a set of longer essays in which authors explore the place of anarchist studies in different research contexts. All the contributions have been commissioned for the collection and are published here for the first time. To meet the second aim and support further research, the book includes a substantial resources section, and a bibliography which includes specialist guides to a range of non-English literatures. A separate section of keywords, people and concepts is included to help contextualize some of the ideas discussed in this book and to fill some of the gaps that inevitably remain in the collection.

Problems of Anarchist Research

The approaches to anarchism discussed in the opening section of the book reflect a general concern to think about what constitutes anarchist research. There are a number of questions here: Are there approaches to analysis which are distinctively anarchist or more open to anarchistic ways of thinking than others? How has the study of anarchism shaped, and how might it constructively and critically reshape, conceptions of its constituent ideas and movements? What can anarchist approaches contribute to established disciplines and fields of study? Saul Newman, Benjamin Franks, Allan Antliff, Uri Gordon and Alex Prichard provide some responses.
Saul Newman’s discussion of postanarchism offers an answer to the first question and argues that anarchist political theory should be rooted in a particular philosophical approach. In this opening essay he argues that anarchism adopts what he calls a ‘war model’ approach to politics, presenting a conception of power and authority which is militantly hostile to claims of legitimate sovereignty and which is open, in principle, to ideas of contestation. Yet in the past, anarchists have failed to realize the potential of the war model. The theoretical projects designed by leading anarchist figures, including Bakunin and Kropotkin, were shaped by a desire to find universally valid solutions to the asymmetries of power and authority that the war model exposed. As a result, they reduced the tensions that run through social relations to single stand-offs between opposing players. This approach, Newman contends, is deeply flawed, and it maintains the idea of the sovereign even while opposing its physical embodiment. The genuinely anarchistic approach gestures instead to postanarchist theory which, adopting a perspectival approach to truth and knowledge recognizes that there can never be a solution, nor a resolution to social contestation. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s work, Newman argues that the war model points to a politics based on individual autonomy and an ethic of sociability and a philosophical approach that embraces the complexity of politics and the power relations that inescapably fracture all social relations.

Like Newman, Benjamin Franks also thinks that some theoretical approaches are more appropriate to the study of anarchism than others. However his discussion focuses on the ways in which analysis of anarchism has resulted in the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of anarchist ideas. Franks considers the possibilities of analytic political philosophy as a lens for anarchist research and finds that it tends towards the distortion and trivialization of anarchism, narrowing the field for analysis and notably excluding non-academic writing. Anarchism, he argues, is best understood through the identification and arrangement of its core and peripheral concepts, not as philosophers have wanted to define them – in terms borrowed from liberal theory – but as they have been elaborated by activists. Unlike Newman, who locates the theoretical failures of anarchism from within the anarchist tradition, Franks argues that the problems of analysis have arisen from outside, primarily from within academia and he looks to grass roots literatures to find correctives. Moreover, whereas Newman points out a mismatch between anarchist politics and philosophy, Franks locates the problem in mainstream liberal theory. Both argue that answers to the question ‘what is anarchism’ have been moulded by the theoretical approaches deployed in its analysis but the issue that their essays raise is whether it is the anarchists or their critics who have adopted theory adequate to their politics.

Allan Antliff’s discussion of anarchism and art history highlights the distinctiveness of anarchist approaches to research and shows both how research
interacts with practice, to creatively shape and reshape understandings of anarchism, and how it effectively challenges the orthodoxes that seek to marginalize anarchist ideas. Giving an account of the unsympathetic mis-readings that his own work has suffered, he highlights the politicization of the art history field and the unwillingness of some leading scholars either to accept the extent of anarchist influence on modernism – Antliff’s research specialism – or ways of thinking about ‘art’ and ‘politics’ which interrogate and appreciate their complex interrelation. Central to his conception of this relationship is an idea of history as a process of creative unfolding, in which artists and activists seek to transform the social order through their interventions – individual and collective – in the world. Because it reserves an important place for subjectivity and individual autonomous action in social struggle, Antliff’s idea challenges dichotomous conceptions of individual-social action and sketches an idea of freedom as becoming which is fully consistent with notions of structural disadvantage and oppression. Methodologically, his treatment also clears a path to understand the history of art as a rich interpretative field for contemporary activism. Here, there are resonances with Newman’s approach, but in Antliff’s hands, the anti-deterministic, anti-dialectical, anti-hegemonic thrust of anarchism reveals affinities which extend into the past, as well stimulating new ones – for example, in anti-colonial struggle and through engagement with Indigenous cultural production – in anarchism’s present.

Uri Gordon’s essay focuses on participant observation and argues that this approach not only provides a useful tool for research into anarchist movements, but that it is infused with and supportive of anarchist values. As participant observers or insiders, researchers gain privileged access to activist processes; they importantly aid militant activism by facilitating movement debates and reflecting critically on the contradictions or tensions that their interventions help reveal. Moreover, they challenge themselves by entering into actions. Gordon illustrates how by drawing on his own experiences as a participant observer in the protest movement. Although his approach to research is very different from both Newman’s and Franks’ he too argues that there are distinctively anarchist approaches to research and that the adoption of methods sympathetic to anarchist values can positively reshape self-understandings as well as external conceptions of anarchism. Similar to Franks, he looks for ways in which activist languages can be translated into high theory without distortion and/or the extension and institutionalization of the gaps separating different groups of activists. Acknowledging that academic argument is evaluated by standards that diverge enormously from movement practices, Gordon argues that intellectuals are able to make a gift of their knowledge – a suggestion that implies a stronger division between research and activism than Antliff identifies. Gordon is equally committed to the rejection of vanguardism but finds Gramsci’s model of the organic intellectual instructive. At the end of his essay, he returns to this
division, looking from inside the academy out, to consider the motivations for research and the extent to which researchers working within academic institutions can remain accountable to the movements with which they engage, while also maintaining their personal integrity. The question that his analysis begs is whether the virtues required of participant observers extend to all areas of life – including academia – or whether the location of activists within academic institutions necessarily erects a barrier with the outside world, which researchers have a duty (though the adoption of participant observation) to overcome.35

Alex Prichard asks questions about what it means to think anarchistically both in order to demonstrate the value of anarchism to international relations (IR) theory and to show how distinctively anarchist approaches to the study of the international system help contextualize the practical struggles with which contemporary anarchists engage. He begins his analysis by outlining the ways in which IR theorists – who typically inhabit Anglo-American institutions – have understood the international world. Although taking a lead from Hobbes, he argues that contemporary theory no longer assumes that the interaction of individual sovereigns necessarily spells violent disorder and chaos. So-called realists in IR instead accept the possibility of cooperation. Nevertheless, the destructive image of anarchy remains deeply embedded in the theoretical imagination, and the potential fully to embrace it as a virtuous condition has been buried under a heap of critical literatures. Prichard finds the inspiration for a different view in Proudhon’s work and, in particular, his refusal to privilege any sovereigns – groups or individuals – in thinking about social relations in the real world. The idea of power he finds in Proudhon is not far removed from the conception that Newman recommends and it is consistent with the idea of flux and becoming that Antliff champions. For Prichard, the radical pluralism of Proudhon’s anarchy illustrates how the invention of artificial hierarchies and attempts to institutionalize them, results in stultification, too often expressed in repressive violence and war. The horizontal, decentralizing and federal features of anarchy provide a solution to this problem, but Prichard’s point is not just to highlight the organizational value of anarchy and the order that springs from it. In addition, he also shows how the actions and practices of groups and individuals working outside the formal structures of the state realize anarchy’s promise. The final part of his essay provides a framework for understanding prefigurative action and, taking Gordon’s work as an example for the discussion, Prichard shows in a different way how theory intermeshes with practice.

**Current Research and Issues**

The essays at the centre of the book have been organized around a broad set of themes – history (Carissa Honeywell), sociology and anthropology (Jonathan
Purkis), genders and sexualities (Sandra Jeppesen and Holly Nazar), literature (David Goodway), revolution (Laurence Davis), social ecology (Andy Price), social movements (Sara Motta), geographies and urban space (Ian Cook and Joanne Norcup) and eurocentrism (Süreyyya Evren). Each essay provides a particular perspective on research within these fields and in different ways each also contributes to the discussion of anarchist approaches raised in the first section.

Carissa Honeywell’s essay is a contribution to historical scholarship and it examines the original contribution of a lost generation of post-war Anglo-American anarchists. She considers the place that this generation occupies in anarchist historiography in order to challenge conventional treatments of anarchist political theory and defend the intelligibility of anarchist claims about freedom. In doing so, she picks up on some of the themes that Franks explores in his discussion of analytic political philosophy: anarchist political thought, she notes, has gained a reputation for fuzzy incoherence largely because it does not fit the theoretical template of mainstream liberal theory. Specifically, when Alex Comfort, Herbert Read, Colin Ward, Paul Goodman and Murray Bookchin thought about freedom, they adopted a conception that prevailing ideas about positive and negative liberty could not capture. Indeed, turning the tables, Honeywell argues that their reflections highlight the narrowness of liberal conceptions and the value of rethinking freedom anarchistically. Although Honeywell highlights the innovation of the post-war generation, she also sees continuity between the anarchism of this group and the late nineteenth-century anarchists, especially Kropotkin. Their ideas of freedom were shaped by the particular contexts they inhabited and their familiarity with bodies of research – psychology, for example – that blossomed during the period. In important ways, she shows that they remained wedded to a conception of science that postanarchism has attempted to explode. Nevertheless, in the light of the conclusions that Newman draws from his critique of anarchist thinking, Honeywell’s argument is significant because it suggests that the problems that he identifies in classical anarchism might be linked to anarchist historiography rather than to the adoption of faulty or simplistic assumptions about human nature.

Jonathan Purkis’s essay, which looks at shifts in sociology and anthropology, is also a reflection on what constitutes anarchist theory. Questions of approach, he argues, cannot be disentangled from the values that inform anarchist research. Like Franks and Antliff, he argues that academic institutions are often hostile environments for anarchist research and that anarchists working in these fields, especially sociology, have had to battle to make themselves heard. Corporate funding of academic research has left activist academics in a precarious position. And the difficulty that activist researchers face is not just how to use academic rules to defend radical research projects, in the ways
that Gordon illustrates, but of challenging the assumptions, values and structures that underpin the practices and behaviours that anarchist sociologists and anthropologists seek to study and critique. Echoing some of Newman’s concerns Purkis argues that the problems lie at the meta-theoretical level. Dominant intellectual traditions are based on theories of knowledge which insist on a division between researchers and subjects, establishing paradigms through which the latter are identified, categorized and assessed. Conceptions of marginal or deviant behaviours are elaborated against norms that are value-laden and culturally specific, typically linked to conceptions of progress and ideas of rationality that are shaped by Western capitalist experience. Yet Purkis finds that there is scope for anarchist research, not only in anthropology where a number of leading voices are anarchist, but also in sociology, where the constraints have been tighter. Hitchhiking provides the theoretical touchstone for his work and in a discussion which itself moves from America in the 1970s to modern day Latvia he outlines why. Hitchhiking offers a means to examine cultural variations in social attitudes. It is open to informal practices otherwise neglected in traditional study: practices based on mutual aid, cooperation, trust and gift-giving. Above all, hitchhiking supports an anarchistic programme of research by providing a frame for the development of a new, enchanted idea, of modernity.

Sandra Jeppesen and Holly Nazar share Purkis’s concerns about the accessibility of academic institutions to anarchists and, like Franks, they show how grass roots and activist ideas have been marginalized or ignored in academic accounts of anarchism. The result, they note, is the construction of an idea of anarchism that not only fails to capture the concerns and interests of particular anarchist movements, but one which prioritizes some voices – typically white, straight, bourgeois and male – over others. Their essay on gender and sexualities also considers how scholarship is presented and received by others. One problem, which they seek to overcome, is the assumed or claimed authority of the writer. For Jeppesen and Nazar, this claim militates against engagement in anarchist practice. They develop the point by looking at anarchafeminist and queer anarchist involvement in contemporary North American movements. In a wide-ranging discussion which looks at anti-colonialism and racism as well as issues of gender, they show how feminists challenged and continue to challenge established anarchist accounts of oppression based on capitalism and class and how they revealed the ways in which multiple forms of oppression intersect. Understanding these intersections, they argue, is a central task of anarchist research and one which they seek to encourage. Yet the process of research is as important as its framing. Pursuing another line of inquiry, Jeppesen and Nazar show how feminists have championed forms of practice based on discussion, consensus, non-hierarchical organizing, sharing and mutual support. Uncovering the continuing tensions within anarchism and
the importance of recognizing the intersections between them, Jeppesen and Nazar situate their contribution within this context. So while they raise important questions about anarchist historiography and the construction of anarchist traditions, picking up on themes explored by both Honeywell and Franks, they limit claims to their own authority by setting out some of possibilities for further research and routes to understanding. In this way they engage in deeply democratic research practices that eschew elitism.

David Goodway’s essay focuses on British literary traditions and through a discussion of Oscar Wilde, George Orwell, Alex Comfort and Aldous Huxley he illuminates the rich affinities between anarchism and creative writing. His focus is on British writing, indeed, he argues that Britain has produced the most varied and impressive body of libertarian literature in the world, notwithstanding the lack of a significant popular anarchist movement. His discussion uses Kropotkin’s claims about the dovetailing of anarchism with all manner of advanced thought and Read’s ideas about the politics of the unpolitical as a springboard. His concern is not to claim particular individuals for anarchism or narrowly to examine the work of those who explicitly identified as anarchists. Rather, highlighting three different types of affinity (labelled contrarian, humanist and anarchist) he considers the anarchistic nature of literary practice. A key theme running through the discussion of these affinities is the role of intellectuals in social struggles; and Goodway is keen to capture his authors’ very different responses. His engagement with them raises difficult and significant questions about the limits of revolutionary ambition and the extent of state power, particularly in the post-war period, the legitimacy of violence as a means of struggle and the relationship between personal expression and social change – a relationship that is sometimes wrongly captured as a choice between lifestyle and social anarchism. Moreover, although the historical context is not elaborated explicitly, the historical sweep of his essay – from Kropotkin in the late nineteenth century to J. B. Priestly in the mid-twentieth – illustrates the multidimensional nature of anarchist thinking throughout the period. Highlighting the intersections of anarchist and libertarian ideas, Goodway not only develops an approach to the study of anarchism and literature which is anarchistic, he also presents an account of British anarchism which complements Honeywell’s work.

Laurence Davis’s discussion of revolution picks up some of Goodway’s themes, looking specifically at debates about revolution. Noting both the central role that anarchism has played in the global justice movement and the renewed significance that mass protest has taken in recent times across the world, he argues that reflection on revolution is not only timely, but that practice-based research has an especially valuable part to play in thinking the possibilities for radical change. Davis identifies two orientations in anarchist thought: one is class struggle and the other is what he calls ‘revolutionary exodus’. Associating
the first with anarcho-communist and syndicalist ideas and, specifically, the work of Michael Schmidt, Lucien van der Walt and Wayne Price he defends the creative and constructive potential of the second, crediting David Graeber, Uri Gordon and Richard Day with its exposition. There are, Davis argues, significant methodological and theoretical differences between Graeber, Gordon and Day and the result is a set of sometimes overlapping and sometimes incompatible ideas about popular resistance, radical democracy, solidarity and mass politics, not a uniform theory. Nevertheless, the attempt to reimagine revolution, Davis argues, compares favourably to ideologically divisive and outmoded class struggle conceptions and it rightly understands radical social change as process rather than event. Davis does not unpack the historical construction of class struggle anarchism, but the division he identifies assumes a discontinuity in anarchist traditions not very far removed from Newman’s understanding. Moreover, in showing how alternative conceptions of revolution encourage anarchists to think differently about the relationship between present and future, Davis finds another dimension in the classical-new dichotomy.

Andy Price’s essay traces the development of ecological thinking in anarchism since the late 1960s and examines some of the different directions that it has taken. He focuses on the work of Murray Bookchin who, he argues, not only pioneered social ecology and tied it to anarchism, but also adopted a programme for action that remains attractive and more politically instructive than other radical green alternatives. Bookchin’s central insights, Price argues, are his understanding that human beings are part of the natural world but distinct from it and that evolution (as Kropotkin argued) tends towards increasing diversification and complexity. As nature’s most complex creatures, Bookchin claimed that humans occupy a uniquely powerful position in the natural world. Unlike other species they have the capacity to intervene in the evolutionary process in positive or negative ways, either encouraging complexity and diversification or working against it. The anarchist dimension of Bookchin’s social ecology is his claim that industrialization, statist organization and the centralization of social, economic and cultural phenomena militate against natural evolutionary trends and that alternative, participatory, communal, decentralized social forms should be developed to confront and challenge capitalist and state power. Price presents a robust defence of Bookchin’s work and he endorses the minimum and maximum programme (‘communalism’) he devised as possible routes to a self-managed, balanced and participatory society. Notwithstanding Bookchin’s late disenchantment with anarchism, Price finds that his brand of social ecology remains relevant to it; that recent work in anthropology reinforces the view of the natural world that social ecology elaborates and that contemporary urban experiments demonstrate the continuing value of his programmes for civic re-engagement. Like Honeywell, Price defends the theoretical intelligibility of Bookchin’s thought and in arguing for the adoption of research agendas
that are shaped by practical concerns to deliver anarchistic programmes of social change, he also reflects on the relationship between theory and practice. In social ecology, however, he identifies ideological aspiration as the significant limit to theorizing, not the constraints of mainstream research cultures.

Sara Motta takes a very different view. Her essay on social movements in Latin America opens with a methodological problem which she examines in a reflective discussion of her own position as a researcher. Like Purkis, Motta is interested in finding a way to understand the practices of historically marginalized and colonized groups without imposing new, external frameworks of analysis which are equally distorting. Established ways of thinking are not up to the task, since they prioritize theories of knowing and categories of being that are part and parcel of the colonizing project. She finds part of the answer in the adoption of the ethic of plurality and diversity associated with post-left anarchy and the philosophical critique (which dovetails with postanarchism) that drives it. Yet this is only part of the answer, since post-left anarchy, she argues, is also shaped and informed by particular strategies and desires that remain rooted in Western capitalist culture, albeit in its critique. The methodological problem Motta identifies is resolved only through a process of border-thinking: the recognition that the legacy of the colonial relationship is felt philosophically as well as in social, economic or cultural spheres. Border-thinking demands the acknowledgement of the colonial priority and the double-translation of ideas: the discussion of post-left anarchy alongside the examination of Latin American practices. The interchange between radical anarchist theorizing and Latin American organizing allows Motta to hold up a mirror to reflect on both. In this way, her essay exemplifies in its approach the kind of politics that she seeks to pursue. Discussion and dialogue lie at its heart.

Ian Cook and Joanne Norcup’s essay on geographies and urban space highlights the debt that contemporary radical geographers owe to anarchists, notably Kropotkin and Elisee Reclus, who challenged state-centric currents within the discipline, forged by military, market and colonial agendas. The mantel of late nineteenth-century anarchism was inherited by Colin Ward, and his work, along with Kropotkin’s, provides a focus for their discussion. Through an appreciation of Ward’s work on cities, they show how the critical frameworks pioneered by Kropotkin facilitated the study of alternative practices and movements, enabling researchers to understand the links between macro and micro processes, local and global movements. For Cook and Norcup, the relationship between research and practice is integral to geographical work: the questions that have been asked are about the agendas that research supports. However, recent radical practice, inspired by anarchism, has encouraged participation action research – an approach similar to Gordon’s. This has enabled contemporary researchers to use the observations of community action, mutual aid and cooperation, which informed Kropotkin and Ward’s theoretical perspectives,
as a springboard for the design of research programmes that are part of transformative practice. Their case study material, from Liverpudlian community groups and China’s Gung Ho movement focus on the use of urban spaces and planning processes. In the latter sections of the essay, Cook and Norcup consider the relationship between geographies and anarchafeminism, examining the educational experiments and community initiatives in which radical geographers have been involved. One of their concerns, to transform education from a system of study into a learning practice based on skill-sharing, picks up on ideas explored by Jeppesen and Nazar. And Cook and Norcup also point to the continuity between nineteenth and early twentieth-century anarchist traditions. The contexts in which radical geography operates vary and are diverse. But for them, as for Honeywell, the significance of anarchist ideas – historical and contemporary – remains significant and inspirational.

Süreyyya Evren’s essay returns to the themes explored in Motta’s work and examines colonialism in anarchism. However, whereas she considers the barriers to existing dialogue, he looks at the ways in which colonialism has infused and distorted understandings of the anarchist past. Anarchism, he argues, has not only been built around the ideas of a few white men but, moreover, treated as the flowering of a European idea. On this account anarchism is a cultivar not a rhizome; and its success outside Europe can be explained by the work of single emissaries or by the particular receptiveness of non-Europeans to good European thinking. Like Antliff, Evren sees anarchism as a fluid, multidimensional, horizontal and global movement; a network extending from urban hubs, driven by interpersonal contacts, chance meetings and the exchange of ideas through a range of grass-roots media. The patterns of anarchy that he maps show how anarchist ideas intersected with and were changed by encounters with other currents of thought – like Antliff, he finds that the overlaps with art have been significant – and how the global network shaped a coherent, yet plural and open-ended ideology. Questioning the linear Eurocentric flow of dominant colonial accounts, he also reflects on some of its distortions: the idea that anarchism is a theory-less ideology, picking like a magpie on Marxism and liberalism. Like Motta, Evren is sympathetic to post-structuralist philosophy but his analysis challenges the assumptions which underpin postanarchist critiques of historical anarchism and, in contrast to the critics, he refuses to distance himself from these traditions. Postanarchists, he contends, have wrongly focused on past philosophy and have failed to deconstruct anarchist historiography. The failure properly to understand the past continues to frustrate action in the present: anarchists remain locked in a colonial mindset. Adding yet a further dimension to the discussion, and showing that anarchist ideas were always intimately connected to movements, he argues that reflecting on the past and its construction is an essential component in current practice.
Research Practices

Many of the contributors note that anarchism remains some distance from the mainstream in their disciplinary fields. But as their work illustrates, its location on the margins has often encouraged innovation in research and the development of novel approaches. Invention sometimes results from necessity particularly where, as Purkis finds, orthodox methodological approaches appear antithetical to anarchist perspectives. In other instances, it comes from a conscious desire to cut across disciplinary boundaries or to break free from established conventions. From the margins, most also argue that their work is motivated by a desire to engage with anarchist politics. This desire pulls research in very different directions. For Gordon, Cook and Norcup and Davis engagement takes the form of immersion or involvement in movement activity. For Jeppsen and Nazar, Purkis and Motta it is expressed through the exploration of movement practices. In Price’s work, it is about developing applications. For Newman, Prichard, Franks, Honeywell, Goodway and Evren engagement takes the form of radical critique. But for all these differences, engagement is probably the factor most consistently identified as the distinctive trait of anarchist research.

The relationship between research and political engagement is a thorny one, notwithstanding recent efforts to overcome what is often seen as a deep divide. There are a number of reasons for this. One set spring from what Goodway identifies as anarchism’s anti-bourgeois bent. Broadly conceived, this set might be considered as class-based claims about the privileged socio-economic position that researchers – specifically those based in universities – enjoy and the compromises that participation in market-driven education systems involves, usually at the cost of anarchist alternatives: the development of critical pedagogies, free skools, knowledge labs, DIY publication and copy-left distribution.  

A second set of objections cluster around what Goodway calls anarchism’s historical anti-intellectualism: the anti-elitist complaint that research cements a power relationship based on intellect that is hierarchical and authoritarian.  

Jeppesen and Nazar give contemporary voice to this concern in their discussion of non-hierarchical knowledge production, as do Motta and Evren, in their respective critiques of Western philosophy and Eurocentric theorizing. These objections play out in a number of ways: from complaints about the inaccessibility of research and the alienating, adversarial practices it encourages, to frustrations about its relevance – as Franks notes, the puzzlement about the purposes of endlessly discussing the anarchist canon. Yet perhaps the strongest theme running through these critiques is that research is predicated on a theory-practice divide and that it is the gap between thinking and doing that anarchist researchers must overcome. Davis makes this point in the conclusion to his discussion of revolution: ‘the crucial discussions and debates that
need to be held will take place not in the pages of academic books and journals, but on the streets in the general assemblies of a genuinely democratic and global revolutionary movement.’ It resonates with critiques of philosophical anarchism, usually associated with Robert Paul Wolff’s *In Defence of Anarchism*, which consciously divorced intellectual engagement with anarchist principles from anarchist politics. And, notwithstanding the significant and positive influence of Paul Feyerabend’s ideas on currents within contemporary anarchist research, it might equally be applied to his critique of method – epistemological anarchism – since the rejection of method describes another purely intellectual form of anarchism, similarly combined with a rejection of anarchist politics.

There are tensions and risks in this position. Unqualified, the danger of the critique of theory is that it extends to the claim that anarchism describes a principle of action or an ethical discourse less developed than or even parasitic on other theoretical constructions – notably, Marxism. Ironically, rather than challenging the theory/practice divide, this response merely reinforces it, and insofar as it encourages a rejection of all theorizing, potentially involves a voluntary subordination of anarchist thinking to boot. The complaint about the relevance of research to everyday political activity similarly cements divisions between thinkers and doers and points to a model of gift-giving, to borrow Gordon’s terms, that is problematic, not just because it places the researcher in the position of the giver, but also to the extent that it requires researchers to deliver gifts that they might not wish to give. Either way, pushed too far, the theory/practice divide risks further marginalizing bodies of research that seek to reveal the biases of mainstream accounts of anarchism, probe its affinities and/or contribute to the elaboration of distinctively anarchist approaches and ideas.

**Anarchist History and the Anarchist Past**

The theory/practice divide is not the only relationship which has a sting. Another idea of division, the separation of contemporary anarchist practices from historical anarchist traditions, the desire to show how far contemporary thinking about theory and practice differs from conceptions inherited from the past, also presents important issues for anarchist research. Indeed, it supports some of the most contentious philosophical and political disagreements in contemporary anarchism.

The relationship between contemporary anarchism and the anarchist past is a recurrent theme of the collection which might be explained as a consequence of the recent expansion of research activity. For though concerns about the gap between theory and practice are not new, the context in which contemporary
researchers seek to meet them has altered radically in the last 20 years or so. Framed by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rise of the global protest movement, anarchism has acquired a new present, and in doing so, researchers have reflected afresh on the nature of anarchism’s past.

Goodway’s observation about the invisibility of anarchist scholarship and the marginalization of the anarchist movement by historians in the 1970s and 1980s indicates the extent to which references to anarchism were typically understood at that time to refer to a movement or set of ideas which appeared only to have a past. Paradoxically, the explosion of punk in the late 1970s tended to confirm this status. With the rise of the global protest movement at the end of the 1990s this changed. And while politicians quickly resurrected tired old stereotypes about anarchy, violence and chaos others blew the dust off books and articles that had lain forgotten since the late 1960s, to declare anarchism’s new awakening. In this way, the protest movement provided a space for a new generation of anarchists to conduct and publish their work, kick-starting a discussion of anarchism’s revival in the process. Yet the significance of the protest movement’s rise for anarchist research is not just that it provided a better opportunity to publish academic work than had previously been the case, but that it also set a new marker for the past’s evaluation. And in establishing anarchism’s presence, it did not quite explode the underlying idea of its earlier death. It instead provided a new diagnosis for its demise.

The peaks and troughs of anarchist activity are well established in the literature on anarchism: although the birth is variously dated to 1840 (the publication of Proudhon’s What is Property) and 1871 (Bakunin’s break with Marx), its death is usually dated to crushing of the Spanish revolution in 1939. Goodway notes that the Spanish defeat completed a ‘drastic decline as an international force of revolt’. And although recent histories contest this view, he added ‘anarchism from the 1940s has had scarcely a toehold in any labour movement’. The year 1968 represents the moment of anarchism’s first, albeit fleeting re-emergence but for most observers, the character of the movement was utterly changed. This anarchism was new. Whereas the ‘classic’ anarchism of the past had been built on ideas of class struggle, violent revolution and confrontation, the movements of the 1960s promoted social diversity, creativity, indiscipline and fun. Where the older form was shot through with heroism and tragedy, new anarchism was innocent, optimistic and charmingly naive. The emergence of the global protest movement in 1999 similarly established fresh frameworks for the past, inviting comparisons between the apparently new anarchism and the old and, specifically, the identification of parallels between movement activity, on the one hand, and the cultural or theoretical shifts that dovetailed with moments of revival, on the other.

The way in which researchers have positioned themselves in respect of the past is a key marker of contemporary debate. The following section outlines...
two different understandings of that relationship before returning to discuss the implications for anarchist research. The first stresses the discontinuity of contemporary anarchism from the anarchist past and the second finds continuity with it and challenges the accounts of anarchism on which the discontinuity is based.

**Contemporary Anarchism and the Anarchist Past: Discontinuities**

The conscious divorce of contemporary anarchism from earlier traditions has been driven by multiple concerns: the narrowness of its political vision, the inadequacy of its philosophical assumptions and its espousal of an outmoded theory of change loom large in contemporary critique. These concerns might be ordered and linked in a variety of ways. The manner in which the critique of the past is fleshed out also varies. Nevertheless the central component is the idea of the classical anarchist tradition.

Classical anarchism refers to a set of ideas abstracted from a canon of thought. Studies in the history of anarchist ideas identify varying numbers of influential thinkers but the list is often pared down to a triumvirate – Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. Typically, as Evren points out, anthologies of anarchist writings have a broader scope than studies of political thought, but the point remains that the list of founding fathers identified in anarchism’s history is very narrow and that the selection overwhelmingly favours particular voices. For the most part, the worthies of anarchist thought are white, educated, men. Consequently, a strong reason to reject classical anarchism is that it constraints anarchism’s political imagination. While few critics would argue that anarchist political thinking was inevitably limited by the social or class location of its leading exponents, the misogyny of leading writers and the seam of anti-feminism that ran through anarchism, has been amply demonstrated and linked back to leading classical writers and the canon’s exclusivity.

The identification of the key theorists of anarchism is fundamental to the critique of the tradition’s philosophical weakness because the argument about discontinuity assumes the earlier elaboration of a coherent ideology – distilled from the ideas of the classical anarchists. The broad claim, which Newman advances, is that anarchists adopted a set of philosophical assumptions which limited their revolutionary project. Kropotkin, in particular, drew on the scientific and rationalist approaches typical of the age and his understanding of the world was informed by an idea of truth-seeking and certainty that is not only outmoded but which tends towards a politics that is out of step with current practices. Even where anarchists were less open in their embrace of positivist science than Kropotkin, critics argue that the founding fathers grounded their thought on philosophically shaky assumptions: a fixed conception of human
nature, an understanding of power which identified it exclusively with the institutions of the state (itself conceptualized in a unified, narrow and legalistic manner) and an idea of struggle based on the naive hope that, when the institutions of oppression were swept away, liberated peoples would be free to realize their true nature and live in perpetual peace and harmony. This is an idea of revolution as cataclysmic event similar to the conception that Davis critiques. And just as he argues that this model is outdated, critics of classical anarchism argue that all these ideas conflict with the plural, diverse, horizontal politics of twenty-first-century anarchism. As if to underline the point, some critics voice an additional concern, often in respect of Kropotkin, that anarchism was importantly shaped by the adoption of a theory of evolutionary change. Classical anarchism, on this account, was teleological: both wedded to a utopian ideology and a deterministic conception of history. The general impression, as Jesse Cohn observes, is that ‘where the classical anarchists . . . clung to naïve notions about science, progress and human nature . . . new anarchism boldly dispenses with such outworn fetishes’.

The past that the discontinuity thesis rejects is a theoretical perspective, said to have been dominant in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the same token, the newest forms of new anarchism are not the result of an ineluctable process of change – such as the classical anarchists are said to have theorized – but of its sympathetic critique. Indeed, to highlight the shortcomings of the classical tradition, critics often refer approvingly to Gustav Landauer’s conception of the state as a social relationship, an idea he expressed in 1910. There is no contradiction, then, in the discovery that remedies for anarchism’s revision can be found from within the history of anarchist ideas, not only in the work of Landauer, but of Max Stirner and/or in the embrace of Nietzsche, who inspired other anarchists typically excluded from the canon, notably Emma Goldman.

The desire to break with the anarchist past has led contemporary research in a number of directions: the development of inventive philosophical projects and the expression of a rich utopian politics based on creative, radical autonomy, continuous resistance, rebellion and subversion; away from talk of the tocsin and the barricades and to discussion of protest, disobedience and direct actions. Discontinuity has encouraged ideas of revolutionary change based on the adoption of alternative behaviours in everyday life; an interest in practical experimentation, community projects, DiY politics and grass-roots organizing, taking a lead from the pragmatic, social anarchism of Ward and the poetic ontological anarchy of Hakim Bey. Discontinuity has also helped stimulate a sustained critique of the sometimes marked masculine and class biases of the nineteenth-century movement and directed attention to the diffuse ways in which power operates in society, in patriarchy, racism, colonialism and heteronormativity. All this, in turn, has encouraged researchers to rethink the basis
on which research is conducted: to consider how to study, ethically, the ideas and practices of activist constituencies and learn through engagement and experimentation. The richness of this work clearly demonstrates how valuable the idea of the anarchist past has been for contemporary research. However, the way in which it is linked to history is nevertheless troubling.

Contemporary Anarchism and the Anarchist Past: Continuities

Inevitably, perhaps, the appreciation of historical continuity has deepened as a result of the discontinuities that contemporary critics have attempted to establish. And although arguments about continuity are not always raised as counterclaims, some of the strongest defences have been presented in order to reject the idea of the past on which the discontinuity relies. The questions that the discontinuity thesis raises are about the extent to which the canon accurately captures the ideas of the writers linked to it and the legitimacy of using the canon as a marker of historical anarchism.

On the first score, critics accept that the canon exists, but suggest that its construction is deeply flawed and that in drawing on it, the discontinuity thesis add weight to analyses of anarchist thought that are distorting. The canon has instead been framed by an approach to anarchism that prioritizes definition over the application or discussion of ideas and which, almost inevitably, reduces the ideas of anarchists to a few selected texts: few accounts of Proudhon’s work analyse the 55 or more volumes that Prichard mentions, let alone contextualize his thought by examining the movements with which he engaged.

The canonical approach was pioneered by Paul Eltzbacher – a legal philosopher who attempted to capture the essence of anarchism by imposing on the thought of seven selected anarchists a framework of analysis based on the state, property and the law. Landauer considered it ‘far too strict’, overestimating the ‘word’ and failing to appreciate the ‘unspeakable . . . mood’. Undoubtedly, later studies have been less rigid, but the boldness of Eltzbacher’s selection and the definitional clarity he sought from the writers and texts he deemed central to the tradition established a popular mould for later analysis. Notwithstanding the extensive body of work produced by consecutive waves of anarchists, which has been clearly exploratory and informed by a desire to apply anarchist insights to – for example – education, urban design, psychology, philosophy, technology and a variety of social policy issues – his search for ideological precision was replicated, both defensively, in order to contest popular misconceptions, and aggressively to reveal anarchism’s lack of sophistication, inconsistencies and flaws. As Honeywell and Franks point out, where categories borrowed from liberalism have been applied to the analysis of anarchist ideas, the resulting philosophy often appears incoherent and contradictory. Similar
distortions arise when anarchists are assumed to adopt theoretical models that fit varieties of Marxist or liberal thought. The puzzle of Kropotkin’s theory of evolution, namely, the apparent contradiction between his understanding of anarchy as an outcome of historical development and his analysis of the rise of the state, rests on an interpretation of his theory of mutual aid that assumes an idea of natural goodness and a teleological conception of history. To compound the problem, as works of the classical anarchists have been raided to support particular accounts of anarchism, the status of the founding fathers has also changed. Bizarrely, psychology and story-telling have played a significant part in the development of the canon and the interpretation of anarchist thought. One of the ironies of the canon’s construction is that a life-long militant like Kropotkin – who was prepared to up-sticks in support of the 1917 revolution even when he was in his seventies – is sometimes represented as arm-chair revolutionary, an erudite philosopher, a supporter of gradualism rather than revolutionary change – above all, a thinker rather than doer. To support a similar politics, Bakunin suffers the reverse fate. Analysis of his ideas has too often given way to testimony of his domineering, overblown, charismatic and childlike personality and his involvement with Sergei Nechaev – all in order to bolster claims about his, indeed anarchism’s, naive and illiberal tendency to utopianism and fondness for vanguards. Whether the canon has examined in order to fix anarchism’s ideological boundaries, highlight its incoherence or recommend a particular politics, it is difficult to make sense of the anarchist past when the conception of classical anarchism that has helped shape it has so badly skewed the ideas of the writers who suffered the misfortune of being identified as its prime exponents. The legacy of classical anarchism might well be a set of concepts about human nature, state power, revolution and utopia, but there is room to doubt its relationship to the ideas actually expounded by the ‘founding fathers of anarchism’ held responsible for its genesis.

While there is general agreement between researchers about the narrowness of the anarchist canon and the shadow that the spotlight on selected figures casts on the movement as a whole, the status which the discontinuity thesis attaches to the canon as a benchmark of theoretical orthodoxy remains a bone of contention. On specific questions of anti-feminism, for example, the extent to which the beliefs of anarchism’s key exponents – notably Proudhon – suggests a particular weakness or neglect in anarchist culture or thought is open to question. At least, the claim that anarchism changed fundamentally in the period between 1939 and 1968, with the dovetailing of so-called second-wave feminism and anarchist activism, relies heavily on an implicit assumption that views like Proudhon’s predominated in the period before the death and that, by extension, they no longer did so thereafter. As Jeppesen and Nazar’s work suggests, once the exclusivity of the canon is recognized this assumption looks less certain and it becomes more possible to discuss anarcha-feminist politics
on a continuum. Similarly, as Evren points out, it also becomes possible to appreciate anarchist movements in all their complexity and diversity. In sum, once the use of the canon as a definitional marker of classical anarchism is challenged, it is both possible to question the pendulum swings in (European) anarchist culture that the discontinuity thesis identifies, while still endorsing much of the critical thinking that it champions.

Naturally, the history of the movement is much disputed. Some currents within contemporary anarchist history present understandings of anarchism which downplay the significance of the very same strands of thought that the discontinuity thesis identifies as wrongly neglected in the classical tradition. For example, the influence of Nietzsche’s thinking on nineteenth-century anarchism has been challenged as a distortion of classical traditions, as if the association with ideas of individual creativity somehow threatened to sully it, and even though the subjective politics that his work helped stimulate was also strongly linked with Tolstoyan anarchism, usually placed within the classical mainstream. Similarly, challenging the idea of anarchism’s death, recent histories of the anarchist labour and syndicalist movements have persuasively demonstrated how anarchism flourished outside the boundaries of Europe, unaffected by the Spanish catastrophe. Yet in recovering the lost history of non-European movements and revealing the limitations of many anarchist histories, these accounts treat the continuity of anarchist labour organizing as a marker of ideological relevance. In contrast to early twentieth-century studies of anarchism which distinguished anarchist from anarcho-syndicalist ideas and movements, this version of historical continuity conflates the relationship to argue that anarcho-syndicalist movements – worldwide – occupied the main ground of anarchism. This is the conflation that Davis points to in Michael Schmidt, Lucien van der Walt and Wayne Price’s work, and he suggests that it fosters a narrow idea of revolution. Yet more fundamentally, it embraces the description of classical anarchism that the discontinuity thesis critiques precisely in order to claim the past for a particular current within it. One consequence of this account of anarchist history is that it places writers like Leo Tolstoy and Stirner and the movements they inspired at one remove from anarchism proper – but in one box marked ‘irrelevant’ rather than in separate boxes labelled ‘classical’ and ‘postanarchist’. Another is that, in contrast to Evren’s account, the history of anarchism is told as a one-dimensional story. Even where it identifies with feminism and postcolonial critique, anarchism begins with Bakunin and results in the formation of revolutionary labour movements that he was only able to imagine.

Other histories of anarchism arrive at almost opposite conclusions. Historians like Evren, Goodway and Antliff, who are interested in examining the affinities of anarchist ideas, reject the notion that labour and syndicalist movement activity might be ring-fenced from other forms of anarchist struggle, let alone
given definitional priority. Their historical research suggests that questions of labour organization were not traded off against ideas of radical autonomy, creative expression and experimentation with alternative ways of living and that the sort of organizational complexity of anarchy that Prichard illuminates was always a defining feature of anarchist activity. 71 Readings of history that elevate class struggle as a distinctive and singular aspect of anarchism not only fuel the suspicions that discontinuity theorists harbour about the anarchist past, they wrongly gloss over the fluidity of cultural movements and anarchist activism and the interpenetration of a common set of ideas – from Nietzsche, Stirner, Tolstoy and Ibsen to Kropotkin, Malatesta, Goldman and Rocker. By the same token, acknowledgement of this interchange clears the way for a debate about the treatment of classical anarchist concepts because it suggests that anarchists were not only a-tuned to the idea of multiple sites of struggle – the point that Prichard makes about Proudhon, notwithstanding his deafness to feminism – but involved in a diverse range of actions and campaigns. Individuality, concerns with moral regeneration and ethical change were part and parcel of the historical revolutionary movement, even before it was reimagined, and these principles found an outlet in struggles for sexual liberation, contraception, prisoner rights, secular education and experiments in community organizing and against conscription, jingoism, colonialism, nationalism and militarism – within and without syndicalist frameworks. Furthermore, instead of giving a one-dimensional account of anarchism, these accounts of continuity examine the intersections between individuals, currents and movements and trace patterns of parallel, concurrent and consecutive actions that highlight plurality of anarchist movements and ideas.

Notwithstanding the differences between these two accounts of anarchist history, both help bolster the sense of anarchism’s historical continuity. On the one hand, close scrutiny of the anarchist labour movement suggests that the death of anarchism was at most only ever a partial collapse and while it accurately captured a real moment in European history, the reality elsewhere was very different. On the other hand, attention to the complexity of the history of anarchist ideas suggests that anarchism remained vibrant even in European locations where mass movements no longer enjoyed real purchase, in countless underground, countercultural and art-house groups and expressed in literature, music, art, in civil rights, anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-nuclear and peace campaigns. Either way, anarchism remained quite fit even beyond its supposed death in 1939.

Continuity theorists do not deny change within the anarchist movement but in restoring some of the lost links in the history of anarchism, they open a space between the anarchist past and anarchist history. 72 Classical anarchism is revealed as a construct of the former, to be distinguished from the historical movements, and arguments about what anarchism is – which remains fiercely
contested – or might be, can be treated as ordinary, constructive, political disagreements, linked to particular sets of values or ideas, rather than theoretically bounded orthodoxies. Challenging narrow conceptions of the past does not wave a magic wand over the theory/practice divide but it at least frees historical study from its elitist, fusty associations and perhaps makes more transparent the value of apparently irrelevant research. And insofar as historians can resist inventing new definitional orthodoxies and exclusionary claims about the character of the historical movement, it helps reveal the extent of the correspondences and overlaps within the anarchist movement which orthodox accounts of the anarchist past have concealed.

Notes

3. Though Goodway was right to suggest that leading historians had written anarchism out of socialist history, recommending that anarchist history be ‘seriously and appropriately studied’, he might have pointed to geography as a field for anarchist research. As Cook and Norcup argue in this collection, the roots of this influence can be traced to the nineteenth century and owe much to the work of Elisée Reclus and Peter Kropotkin. It is apparent in contributions to the Antipode, the journal of radical geography. On Reclus, see M. Fleming, The Geography of Freedom: The Odyssey of Elisée Reclus (Montreal: Black Rose, 1988) and, more recently, J. Clark and C. Martin, Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: The Radical Social Thought of Elisée Reclus (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).
4. Goodway points to Eric Hobsbawm, who matched an awareness of anarchism’s international significance in nineteenth and twentieth century labour movements with an ideological hostility to anarchist ideas, For Anarchism, p. 7.
6. See Allan Antliff’s chapter for a bibliography.
7. The influence of Kropotkin and Elie Reclus, the brother of Elisée and author of Primitive Folk (London: Walter School, n.d.) can also be felt here. See H. Barclay, People without Government (London: Kahn & Averill/Cienfuegos Press, 1982); H. Barclay,


24. Recent contributions have centred on terrorology, the commentary on and analysis of terrorist threats. See the exchange in Terrorism and Political Violence, 20(4) (2008), and the contributions by R. Bach Jensen and G. Esenwein reproduced at http://slack-bastard.anarchobase.com/?p=1855.
Some of the most searching questions have been asked by writers associated with postanarchism. For a discussion and selection of work, see D. Rousselle and S. Evren, *Post-anarchism: A Reader* (London: Pluto, 2011).


Gordon provides an analysis in *Anarchy Alive!* For state violence, the best known and most extensive anarchist analysis has been developed by Noam Chomsky. For Chomsky's work, go to www.chomsky.info/.


C. Bantman and D. Berry, *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Newcastle-on-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010).


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44. See, for example, Tony Blair’s comments about anarchism, violence and the traveling circus reported available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1392004.stm and Guy Verhofstadt’s ‘The Paradox of Anti-globalisation’, at www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/sep/28/globalisation.


46. Goodway, For Anarchism, p. 2.
The assumptions supporting this claim are examined in Stephen Shukaitis’s account of labour organizing which outlines a dynamic of continuity and change over time: ‘What occurred following the revolts of the 1960s and 1970s, leading up to the present situation, was not a total transformation or withdrawal of the subversive potential of labor’s imagination, but a series of transformations and permutations in how these imaginaries, movements, and practices were conceived: a displacement of a hegemonic imaginary by a diffuse, multiple, and often contradictory and conflicting array of imaginaries. In other words, it’s not that there were class movements and labor organizing (existing as unified, hegemonic wholes) that were replaced by a series of fractured and diffuse movements (i.e. the so-called movement toward identity politics: environmental issues, feminism, questions of cultural and ethnic difference, etc.). Rather, beneath the image of the unified and coherent class movement already existed a series of multiplicitous subjectivities, that while they indeed embody varying forms of class politics are not simply reducible to them. Rather than there being “new” concerns which were different than those found within “old social movements”, ones that because they might at first seem quite different and distinct from previous politics might even be looked upon with suspicion, it’s a question of seeing how those demands and desires were already there, but were lumped together and erased by the false image of a necessary unity that could not accommodate difference within it.’ Imaginal Machines: Autonomy & Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2009), pp. 134–5.


52. Saul Newman quotes Feyerabend’s critique of Kropotkin to make this point (Against Method, p. 302). Ironically, since Feyerabend had little interest in political anarchism, the use of his rejection of method by critics of classical anarchist traditions, tends towards the elevation of anarchist theorizing as a discrete practice in the history of ideas and its separation from political activism. See Newman, The Politics of Postanarchism, pp. 50–1. Feyerabend’s rejection of method has, at the same time, played an important role in shaping contemporary approaches to anarchist research. Gordon identifies Feyerabend as a source for the development of participatory action research. ‘Practising Anarchist Theory: Towards a Participatory Political Philosophy’, Constituent Imagination, p. 282; Jeff Ferrell draws on his work in his discussion of a Dadist anti-programmatic methodology in ‘Against Method, Against Authority . . . for Anarchy’, in Amster, DeLeon, Fernandez, Nocella and Shannon (eds), Contemporary Anarchist Studies, pp. 73–81.

53. Williams’ study of alterglobalization activism on the Larzac plateau in southern France suggests that this is an association that horizontal resistance groups also make. See Williams, Struggles for an Alternative Globalization, pp. 14–15.


55. Cohn is critical of this view. ‘The End of Communication? The End of Representation?’ Fifth Estate, 42(2) (2007), 40.


58. There is complication here, however, Ward’s reference to pragmatism appears in Anarchy in Action, a book which he describes as an ‘updating footnote to Kropotkin’s Mutual Aid’ – the work on which critics have fastened in their criticisms of anarchist teleology (London: Freedom Press, 1982), p. 4. Hakim Bey’s concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) has become a focus for the contemporary interest in relational change. His comments on revolution and the TAZ are in T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone. Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism, 2nd edn (New
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65. However unwilling exponents of Proudhon’s work (and not just Proudhon) have been to scrutinize his anti-feminism, there is extensive body of research which suggests that questions of patriarchy, feminism, sex and gender were well-rehearsed by anarchists long before the 1968 revival. The existence of these currents of thought within anarchist traditions hardly excuses scholars who have neglected or buried these less savoury aspects of anarchist thinking, but it does suggest that idea of the revival, as a moment of theoretical transition, is open to question. In the introduction to the first edition of Post-Scarcity Anarchism, Murray Bookchin noted that anarchism ‘has always been preoccupied with lifestyle, sexuality, community, women’s liberation and human relationships’ (Oakland, CA and Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004), p. x; 3rd edn. For anarchism and feminism, see R. Cleminson, ‘Anarchism and Feminism’, Women’s History Review, 7(1) (1998), 135–8; H. Van Den Berg, ‘Pissarro and Anarchism’, History Workshop Journal, 32(1) (1991), 226–8. For discussions of free love, sexuality and feminism, see W. McElroy, Individualist Feminism of the Nineteenth Century: Collected Writings and Biographical Profiles (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2001); essays by J. Greenway and B. Koenig, Anarchism and Utopianism (Davis and Kinna eds), pp. 171–86; Heckert and Cleminson, Anarchism & Sexuality. John Henry MacKay’s homosexuality and advocacy of ‘man-boy’ love are discussed in T. Riley, Germany’s Poet-Anarchist: John Henry Mackay (The Revisionist Press: New York, 1972) and H. Kennedy Anarchist of Love: The Secret Life of John Henry MacKay (New York: MacKay Society, 1983). MacKay’s ideas are outlined in his novel
The Hustler: The Story of a Nameless Love from Friedrichstrasse (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2002).


This distinction is made by, for example, Albert Weisbord in The Conquest of Power: Liberalism Anarchism, Syndicalism, Socialism, Fascism and Communism, 2 vols (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Let, 1938), vol. 1, books II and III. Weisbord was critical of anarchism but the same distinction is made by Kropotkin in his introduction to E. Pataud and E. Pouget, How We Shall Bring about the Revolution: Syndicalism and the Cooperative Commonwealth (London: Pluto, 1990), pp. vii–xxvii.


Had critics of classical anarchism been interested to look at the available historical literature, the difference between anarchist history and the anarchist past was evident even when Goodway rightly argued that anarchism had been written out of mainstream socialist histories. Apart from Paul Avrich, who Goodway mentions, a number of historians recorded the geographical reach and political plurality of the anarchist movement. This important body of work includes: C. Cahm, Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); A. Carlson, Anarchism in Germany (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972); G. R. Esenwein, Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain 1868–1898 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989); A. Hormusji, Anarchist Thought in India (Bombay/New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964); B. James, Anarchism and State Violence in Sydney and Melbourne, 1886–1896: An Argument about Australian
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73. In an interview in Praxis, the journal of the Red and Anarchist Action Network, George Katsiafas argued: ‘In my opinion, one of the main problems dividing the radical movement has been and continues to be an obsessive compulsion to define ideology first rather than unity on the basis of action and program. By this I mean an over-theoretical orientation – “Zerzanists” vs. “Bookchinites” as a contemporary example in the anti-statist movement’, available at www.redanarchist.org/texts/auto-pub/praxis1/eros/effect.html, last accessed on 31 July 2011.

74. The title of Cindy Milstein’s Anarchism and its Aspirations (Oakland-Edinburgh-Washington: AK Press/The Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2010), which seeks to develop the perceived shift towards ethical anarchism.

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