ANARCHISM & SEXUALITY

Ethics, Relationships and Power

a GlassHouse book

Edited by Jamie Heckert and Richard Cleminson

Anarchism & Sexuality

Anarchism & Sexuality aims to bring the rich and diverse traditions of anarchist thought and practice into contact with contemporary questions about the politics and lived experience of sexuality.

Both in style and in content, it is conceived as a book that aims to question, subvert and overflow authoritarian divisions between the personal and political; between sexual desires categorised as heterosexual or homosexual; between seemingly mutually exclusive activism and scholarship; between forms of expression such as poetry and prose; and between disciplinary categories of knowledge.

Anarchism & Sexuality seeks to achieve this by suggesting connections between ethics, relationships and power, three themes that run throughout the book. The key objectives of the volume are: to bring fresh anarchist perspectives to debates around sexuality; to make a queer and feminist intervention within the most recent wave of anarchist scholarship; and to make a queerly anarchist contribution to social justice literature, policy and practice. By mingling prose and poetry, theory and autobiography, it constitutes a gathering place to explore the interplay between sexual and social transformation.

This book will be of use to those interested in anarchist movements, cultural studies, critical legal theory, gender studies, and queer and sexuality studies.

Jamie Heckert holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh and is a founding member of the Anarchist Studies Network. His writings on ethics, erotics and ecology appear in a variety of activist and scholarly publications.

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Routledge
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This book is dedicated, with loving memories,

to Sam 'Tumbleweed' Roberts

7 January 1986–6 May 2007

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Notes on contributors

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Judy Greenway has been engaged in, and writing about, anarchism, feminism and sexual politics since the 1960s. She is on the editorial board of *Anarchist Studies*, and is a Visiting Research Fellow in Cultural Studies at the University of East London. Many of her articles on anarchism and sexuality are available at www.judygreenway.org.uk.

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Passionately interdisciplinary, **Kristina N. Weaver** holds degrees in Anthropology, History of Science, Creative Writing, and a doctorate jointly supervised in Geography and English Literature. Her work on political violence and the occult in Nigeria is at the experimental edge of literary ethnography. For the past decade, Kristina has practised within social movements resisting neoliberalism in the USA, UK and Nigeria. She currently works as an editor, grant writer and community organiser in Central Virginia.

Acknowledgements

Preface

Sexual anarchy, anarchophobia and dangerous desires

Anarchism & Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power is a timely intervention into current debates on sexual politics. There is a new excitement about anarchism, and about the relationship between anarchism and sexuality: a sense of creativity and potential, as new connections are made and old ones rediscovered. The Anarchism and Sexuality conference which was the initial inspiration for this book is just one example, providing a space where a diverse and passionately engaged group of participants could come together and discuss research, personal experience and political practice.[1] Meanwhile, sexual anarchy, alias 'western decadence', is blamed for everything from natural disasters to 9/11, and misogyny and homophobia are playing a significant part in the resurgence of the political and religious right. Simultaneously, in the latest twist in an old story, warmongers and political opportunists appropriate the language of feminism and gay rights to assert the superiority of 'western civilisation': part of a long history of using claims about the relative status of women, and attitudes towards sexuality, to valorise one group over another. Such 'us and them' accounts erase differences and commonalities within and between communities, and obscure past and present struggles for change. If there is one thing that unites fundamentalists and bigots of all persuasions, it is their attachment to the so-called 'natural order' of sex and gender hierarchy, and their horror of those who threaten it. In this world view, sexual liberation is a variation on anarchism: an attack on the foundations of society, a form of terrorism – anarchy as chaos.

The interplay between sexual authoritarianism and anarchophobia is nothing new. Coming out as an anarchist has some similarities with coming out as gay, and meets with a similar range of responses, from tolerant amusement, to contempt, to hatred and violence. Like 'deviant' sexuality, anarchism may be denounced as an immature phase to be grown out of, as dangerously seductive to the young and/or as an intrinsically violent threat to the status quo, attitudes that mix together fear, fascination and fantasy in a toxic stew.

But important though it is to address prejudice based on ignorance, the truth is that anarchism and sexual nonconformity do indeed threaten existing power relationships. For this reason, refusing to call oneself an anarchist, or gay, or queer – whether from a theoretical rejection of identity politics, a wish to escape damaging stereotypes or a desire to transcend labelling – provides only a temporary breathing space. It could be argued that to avoid the labels perpetuates stigmatisation and erasure, that sense of a politics-which-must-not-be-named. Ultimately, whatever words we do or do not use, expressing dangerous desires will meet with resistance from those whose power and authority depend on maintaining the status quo.

The association between sexual and political dangerousness began long before anarchy acquired its 'ism'. By the late nineteenth century, growing numbers of people in the USA and Europe were speaking out and organising as anarchists. The commentators who responded to the rise of anarchism with dire predictions of social chaos also railed against the sexual anarchy exemplified by the New Women of the period, who dared to speak of sex and gender and question patriarchal power, and by those men who were beginning to formulate new sexual identities and question or refashion masculinity. The challenge for sexual and political dissidents was to reverse the discourse and develop positive identities while critiquing the very notion of 'civilised' society. Some anarchists, feminists and sex radicals who met through friendship networks, or encountered one another's ideas in campaigns around such issues as free speech, marriage law and reproductive rights, began to develop a politics which intertwined their different perspectives.

But not all anarchists, then or since, have seen sex and gender issues as important – another reason why a book such as this is not just welcome, but necessary. Reading it, I was reminded of my own early involvement with anarchist, feminist and lesbian and gay liberation groups in the 1960s and 1970s. We soon discovered that we were not the first to link sexuality with politics: Emma Goldman and Edward Carpenter were hailed as pioneers, their writings reprinted, their names adopted by a variety of groups and organisations. Those of us in anarchist groups tried to reinvigorate them with some of our new ideas and rediscoveries while confronting their sexism and heterosexism, but with limited success; all too often the response

was that of course anarchists are in favour of women's and sexual liberation, so what's to discuss? This attitude of 'Do what you want to do but don't make a fuss or expect *us* to talk about it or change our ways' has a long history in anarchism, and has been repeatedly challenged from a variety of standpoints. Revising what is thought of as 'anarchist tradition' is one way of doing this, as is critiquing anarchist practice in the present.

The latter is what I attempted to do in my first ever piece on anarchism and sexuality, in an anarchist newspaper in 1975. In part an excited report of a Women's Liberation conference on sexuality, the article argued against the glib deployment of a rhetoric of sexual liberation which allowed anarchists and left libertarians to evade the problems and contradictions in their own lives: 'It is easier to theorise and to talk about what we would like to be than to talk about what we are' (Greenway 1975:6). I wanted to encourage readers to take on board not just new ideas about sexuality, but new ways to discuss it. I recall this long-forgotten piece now, because the excitement of that conference, that electric sensation as personal and political suddenly connected in our own lives, not just as rhetoric or theory, was buzzing around again at the 2006 Anarchism and Sexuality conference – and it is such feelings, recaptured in some of the pieces in this book, which help make change seem possible.

In different times and places, the struggle for sexual and gender liberation takes on different shapes and emphases. In the USA and Western Europe, the anarchists, feminists and sexual radicals of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century needed to establish ways of discussing sexuality in the face of censorship and social disapproval. In the early 1970s, when talking publicly about sex was more acceptable, the focus was on the sexism and heterosexism not just of what was then called 'straight society', but also of the 1960s' 'sexual revolution' and the radical left. Experimentation with alternative lifestyles played an important part in the sexual politics of both periods. Today, the idea of 'sexual freedom' seems to be trapped in a hall of mirrors, reflected in the grotesque shapes produced by a multimillion-pound pornography industry and globalised sex trade, and by sex-obsessed religious conservatives predicting Armageddon, but also in the smooth and glossy surfaces of a progressive liberalism which is far more limited and restrictive than it appears to be. The question now is, how to expose the exploitation and oppression that lie behind the mirrors, and to find ways to rethink what sexual freedom could mean.

A recurring theme in all these different contexts has been the need to create spaces in which to explore new ideas and solidarities, practise new ways of relating to one another and begin the processes of change. In the early days of the 1970s' Women's and Gay Liberation Movements, process was all-important. To meet to talk about sexuality meant also to think about the conditions that made such a meeting possible. Meetings, conferences and workshops were organised non-hierarchically, with an emphasis on sharing and listening. The aim was to be inclusive; most events were free or as cheap as possible, with childcare provided by groups such as Men Against Sexism. And the conduct of such meetings, though it did not always live up to our ideals, often felt far more anarchistic (in the positive sense) than anything I had experienced in an anarchist group.

Our ideas were inspired by the sharing of personal experiences, but some of these were easier to talk about than others, and often it was a group discussion of a pamphlet or article which made it possible to begin the difficult and exhilarating process of linking theory and practice. In London, we read articles on sexual politics from Italy, Germany and France as well as from the USA and the UK; they were produced and reproduced, translated and retranslated, often hand-typed and duplicated, given away or sold at cost price.

Since then, desktop publishing and the internet have transformed the possibilities of communication. Today, in very different social and political circumstances, the debates continue in new forms, only now some of them are going on inside as well as outside the scholarly academy – a shift of context that has raised new questions about theory, structures and the relationships between academic and activist work. Insofar as Women's Studies, Lesbian and Gay Studies, Queer Studies and now Anarchist Studies have a toehold in academia, it is because they have been fought for by staff and students who wanted the opportunity to integrate scholarship and political commitment, to challenge the educational status quo, and to contribute to the development of new ways of understanding and changing the world.

These gains have brought new anxieties, quite apart from the struggle to hold on to hard-won courses in times of financial cutbacks and political paranoia. There is the not unjustifiable fear of stigmatisation, or at least of not being taken seriously as a scholar. Years ago, one of my students had her thesis proposal for a critique of scientific theories of homosexuality rejected by a homophobic committee, on the grounds that it was intrinsically biased (that is, that she was a lesbian and not a scientist) and that there was no scholarly basis for such a study. Anarchist scholars have encountered similar institutional prejudice. What helped me to get that decision reversed was being able to cite as a precedent the (then tiny number of) relevant academic publications.[2] The more scholarly work is published in these fields, the more it increases the possibilities for others – another reason this book will be so welcome.

Another problem for those who work as academics is how to do research and writing in a way that reaches out to a variety of audiences, and bridges the perceived gaps between theory and activism. This is not just a question of the accessibility of ideas and language, but of where to publish or speak, when only certain publications and venues are academically acceptable. Moreover, many academics feel under pressure to produce theory with a capital 'T'. For those who feel that one advantage of anarchism is that it neither has nor needs a theoretical Big Daddy, the drive towards theory is politically counterproductive, although others have been creatively inspired by it to take old ideas in new directions. Meanwhile, some activists hold theory, history, academic work of all kinds, in contempt, as though ideas can only be credible or effective when seen to emerge from 'real life struggle' as they define it. It can feel as though, rather than integrating different parts of our lives, we have just multiplied the occasions for feeling defensive and hopelessly compromised.

But we need to sidestep the polarisation of 'activism' and 'academia', theory and practice. History, theory, reading and writing can all be forms of resistance and activism. A more constructive response is to find ways of bringing together different perspectives, analyses, ways of doing things: not answers, but questions; not a single, smooth, impenetrable surface, but rough edges which can spark off one another, provide new points of access. Standard methods of propagating ideas – meetings, conferences, books and articles – can be subverted in form and content to become spaces where past, present and future are reimagined and new ways of thinking become possible. A book like this, mingling prose and poetry, theory and autobiography, is just such a space, a gathering place to explore with serious pleasure the interplay between sexual and social transformation.

Judy Greenway

Notes

1 Anarchism & Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power, University of Leeds, 4 November 2006.
2 The most important of these in making the case was Jeffrey Weeks' pioneering work *Coming Out* (Weeks, 1977).

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Chapter 1

Ethics, relationships and power

An introduction

Jamie Heckert and Richard Cleminson

All of us have to learn how to invent our lives, make them up, imagine them. We need to be taught these skills; we need guides to show us how. If we don't, our lives get made up for us by other people.

—Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind*

Like masturbation, anarchism is something we have been brought up to fear, irrationally and unquestioningly, because not to fear it might lead us to probe it, learn it and like it.

—Cathy Levine, *The Tyranny of Tyranny*

Introduction

With this book, we bring the rich and diverse traditions of anarchist thought and practice into contact with contemporary questions about the politics and lived experiences of sexuality. We've attempted to craft a queer book, both in style and in content: a book that aims to question, subvert and overflow authoritarian divisions between the personal and political, between desires categorised as heterosexual or homosexual, between activism and scholarship, between poetry and prose, and between disciplinary categories of knowledge. In doing so, we attempt to enact what Judy Greenway has called a 'methodological anarchism that relinquishes control, challenges boundaries and hierarchies, and provides a space for new ideas to emerge' (Greenway 2008:324). Bringing this book into the world, we have a number of intentions: first, to make fresh anarchist perspectives available to contemporary debates around sexuality; second, to make a queer and feminist intervention within the most recent waves of anarchist scholarship; and, third, to make a queerly anarchist contribution to social justice literature, policy and practice. But before that, before this book has even been published, we have already been transformed through the process of engaging with each other and each of the contributors and their contributions. Lest we slip into a fetishisation of the future, of ends disconnected from means, of products separated from production, we note that the long slow birth of this book is already making interventions and contributions. The book is not unusual in that respect; all processes, all relationships, have multiple effects. What is unusual, in the goal-oriented 'phallicised whiteness' of capitalism (Winnubst 2006:6), is to appreciate processes and relationships for themselves. This appreciation is one of many inheritances from anarchist, feminist and indigenous traditions for which we are deeply grateful. The book's methodology, running through each piece in this collection, concentrates on raising historical, present and practical questions concerning sex and sexuality, love, desire and intimacy, with a specific focus on a triad of interconnected fields: ethics, relationships and power. By means of its consciously interdisciplinary approach, this book attempts to bring contemporary and historical anarchist interpretations into the pressing spheres of current social, political, ethical and legal debate. In doing so, *Anarchism & Sexuality* bridges a supposed gap between theory and activism, between ideas and 'real life struggle'. By drawing inspiration from the rise of the global movement of movements, and the corresponding waves of anarchist activism and scholarship, this book provides much-needed sources of inspiration for putting anarchistic ethics into practice, focusing on issues such as race, class and gender equality, sexual liberation and sexual violence, the experience of one's own body and the interface between these matters and social mores, psychological patterns, laws and other aspects of 'societies of control' (Deleuze 1992).

Before articulating these messages and their relevance to living our lives, first of all we want to say a few words about how anarchism may be understood. For some, anarchism is very easily defined: either it is a symbol and incarnation of chaos or it is an outmoded revolutionary political ideology originating in social movements of nineteenth-century Europe. Despite its evident trajectory, anarchism is dismissed as an ideology that failed historically to create and

sustain a revolutionary society, an ideology and practice that is locked into an essentialist concept of human nature as primarily generous and good, and that is bound by prioritising class struggle and workplace issues over and above transforming other social relationships. Thus, anarchism is all too often viewed as having little to offer contemporary questions and strategies for undermining seemingly entrenched hierarchies and violent exploitative social relationships. In this second reading, anarchism is more or less confined to the writings of 'anarchist luminaries' such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin and Piotr Kropotkin, experiencing an upsurge in the late nineteenth century and petering out, save in some isolated spots in the periphery of Europe and Latin America, by the end of World War Two. For others, however, anarchism did not die with the Spanish Civil War. Anarchism has since developed through ongoing practical experiments in non-hierarchical organisation and has broadened and deepened its theoretical foundations to offer a striking relevance nowadays. However, while anarchism remains opposed to capitalism and to the state (whether the state-centred politics of liberal democracy or the centralised vertical structures of authoritarian socialism), its relevance to sexuality is perhaps not all that apparent. This definition of anarchism certainly doesn't *sound* sexy (except, perhaps, to those of us with a fetish for revolutionary theory).

Rather than seeing anarchism as an ideology, anarchist historian Rudolf Rocker suggests that it should be understood as a 'definite trend in the historic development of mankind [sic]' to strive for freedom (cited in Chomsky 2005:118). Commenting on this, Noam Chomsky argues that there is no need to pin down anarchism as a singular object because

there will be no doctrine of social change fixed for the present and future, nor even, necessarily, a specific and unchanging concept of the goals towards which social change should tend. Surely our understanding of the nature of man [sic] or of the range of viable social forms is so rudimentary that any far-reaching doctrine must be treated with great skepticism, just as skepticism is in order when we hear that 'human nature' or 'the demands of efficiency' or 'the complexity of modern life' requires this or that form of oppression and autocratic rule.

(Chomsky 2005:119)

As a trend striving for freedom, for liberation, the significance of anarchism for an examination and living out of sexuality might become more obvious. However, many have understandably become critical of notions of sexual liberation after poststructuralist critiques of 'liberation' and in a time where freedom has individualistic connotations. What might sexual anarchy mean, if not the total lack of order and morality that some might imagine? What characterises this anarchist trend besides dismantling authority?

In order to answer these questions, we believe that it can be helpful to think of this 'trend in history' called anarchism as a kind of ethics of relationships, as advocating and practising very different relations of power than those involved in the state, capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy (Heckert 2010a, 2010b). Three 'guiding principles' drive the endeavour in this book to bring anarchist ethics to (sexual) relationships. First, anarchism is not viewed as a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to social problems, but rather as a commitment to diversity as an ethical stance in itself, in sharp contrast to the standardisation and regulation of state and bureaucratic rationales. The contributions in this volume reflect this diversity because situations are different, because life itself is diverse; there are, nevertheless, some commonly shared ethics: agreements to respect a diversity of tactics, support for cultural and ecological diversity in the face of neoliberal imperialism, and resistance to any orthodoxy. Second, anarchism has a radical commitment to equality; anarchy means no one gets to claim the unquestionable status of being on top (*an* = no; *archy* = top, from the Greek *anarkhos*).[1] Instead, relationships are always open to renegotiation. Unlike an individualistic notion of freedom, where one person is to be 'free' (that is, *privileged*) at the expense of others, anarchism's idea of freedom is relational: one person's freedom is inseparable from another's freedom. Thus, anarchist organisation practises horizontality, or perhaps a fluidity of power where no one is in any position of leadership for an extended period and where leadership involves following rather than commanding. Likewise, a radical commitment to equality involves an ongoing process of empowerment so that everyone is better able to contribute to change. This ethic of freedom, in resistance to everyday forms of governmentality and normalisation, subtle or more overt, is addressed in different ways and draws on different analytical tools in each of the essays and short pieces contained in these pages. Third, anarchism, as a daily practice, engages in an ethic of care rather than an ethic of control (including control disguised as care). This book explores how love and solidarity can be articulated in the sphere of sexuality and beyond within societies that may seem ever more disconnected, atomised and authoritarian. Thus,

rather than supporting charity, anarchism favours solidarity where all practices of freedom are recognised as interconnected.

Finally, anarchist ethics place emphasis on listening to others rather than speaking for them or on their behalf. In addressing the sensitive issues of intimacy, love and desire, the essays and poems in this book both argue for and demonstrate this ethic of listening as an alternative to statist patterns of representation and discipline. In the Zapatistas' *Other Campaign*, this inspired approach is demonstrated through a focus on listening to the struggles of others and supporting their capacity for autonomy rather than electoral campaigns to become their representatives (Marcos and the Zapatistas 2006). In anarcha-feminism and radical psychologies, learning to listen to oneself, to acknowledge one's own emotions and desires, is crucial to unlearning patriarchal hierarchies of the rational over the emotional, of mind over body. For, as Saul Newman put it, 'if the problem of voluntary servitude – so often neglected in radical political theory – is to be countered, the revolution against power and authority must involve a micro-political revolution which takes place at the level of the subject's desire' (Newman 2010:6). In listening to our own bodies, our own desires, as well as to others (human and non-human), perhaps we can all come to imagine our own lives.

Part of imagining our own lives – and practising them, too – for many of us is related to how we live our sexuality. For some, this is a fundamental part of their life experience; for others, it is one of a wide range of activities to which limited time is devoted. But today, as some commentators have noted (e.g. Weeks 1985), sexuality has accrued the status of being somehow special, different from other social relationships. Of course, what goes on in sexual relationships is in numerous ways different from what takes place in the relationship amongst workers in the workplace or the interactions between citizens and authorities. But many of the same hierarchies, obligations and behavioural patterns coincide in different relationships, whether we label them intimate, economic or political. The special status of sexuality stems, in part, from a patriarchal separation of the personal from the political, the private from the public. Supposedly natural constructions of masculinity and femininity, double standards across these divisions, whereby it is socially sanctioned that men have many partners and women should be 'chaste', are themselves naturalised. Sexuality has become the truth of the self in a way that other aspects of 'private' life have not; such an incitement to 'be sexual' and to consume the wares of sexuality fits with present exhortations to construct our own lifestyles and identities through avid and repetitive consumption. In other words, who you have sex with (or want to have sex with) is assumed to be a fixed characteristic, an answer to the question of what sort of person you are or an essential part of personhood by which you are valued or denied value; sexual performance also becomes an integral and necessary part of the self. Similar assumptions are rarely made about expressions of desire for golfing, swimming or walking on the beach. The result is that sexuality has become emphasised as a special location for liberation, *the* place where desires can be met.

Making sex special like this causes all sorts of problems, as some branches of feminism and later poststructuralism have argued. For starters, profit-oriented media sell this notion of individualistic sexual liberation, saying not only that people can have the great sex lives they want, but that they *should* have them. How is this supposed to happen? Most people spend all day at rigidly differentiated and hierarchised workplaces, are told to suppress their feelings in order to obey the rules, and find it difficult to come home and become capable of expressing their feelings and desires and listening to those of another. And if (or when) people fail to express their feelings and desires, they are told it is their own fault. However, those faults can be fixed, those problems can be solved by spending money on individual solutions: 'beauty' products and cosmetic surgery, self-help books and psychological magazines that disinter one's 'true' desires and self.

As the realm of sex and relationships becomes ever more privatised, the subject of surveillance and the plaything of psychological expertise, the collective and race/gender/class-inflected elements of sexuality fall from view. Faced with the commodification of sexuality, its privatisation and mediation by capitalism as part of what Foucault termed 'governmentality'– basically the setting into motion of refined techniques that ensure one's inner self and actions are governed (and governed by oneself) to a degree that one is unaware of or assumes as natural – what can anarchism offer?

Anarchism and sexuality in history and in the present

Opposition to the acceptability of coercive social relationships, domination and rigid hierarchies and the advocacy of the construction of living alternatives is not something new to anarchist thought. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the activist and theorist Piotr Kropotkin argued that anarchistic expressions of mutual aid, cooperation and opposition to hierarchical power could be traced back to at least mediaeval European society and that these characteristics continued to prevail in his day. More recently, Colin Ward argued against a simple collapsing of the past and the present by writing that 'an anarchist society, a society which organises itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its wastes' (Ward 1982:14). The very fabric of social life, with its constantly evolving networks of alternatives to hierarchies and its ability to create new forms of social organisation in which control is articulated horizontally, continues to inform day-to-day existence in a way that is easy to overlook, underestimate or forget.

In a fast-changing world we should not forget the historical legacy of past movements which, working with conditions that were in many ways different from those pertaining today, created stories that have a great deal to offer. By looking to the past, we can see how the anarchist critique of the relations of dominance that rely on strictly differentiated gender roles and the organisation of sexuality in accordance with religious or state prerogatives has enjoyed a solid presence in anarchist thought and practice from the late nineteenth century onwards. Examples include early attempts to organise women in revolutionary trade unions in France (Maitron 1983), efforts to promote women's reproductive and sexual freedom as articulated by Emma Goldman (Goldman 1969; Haaland 1993) and others (Passet 2003) in the United States and by small groups of anarchists in Spain, where contraception was demanded and supplied (Nash 1984, 1995). Sexual freedom was, in turn, closely linked to discussions around gender, marriage, the family and free love taking place around the world (Bowen Raddeker 2001; Cohn, 2010; Greenway 2009). Anarchists responded to a diversity of social ills by reconfiguring ways of relating and being in a capitalist world, forging new attitudes towards the body such as nudism (Cleminson 2004), interconnecting the social, political and the literary, as suggested by Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter and Daniel Guérin, and making links between sexual freedom and libertarian socialism, as evidenced in anarchist involvement in the early homosexual rights campaigns from the 1920s onwards (Kissack 2008; Lucien 2006). Female anarchists' critiques of male domination within the early twentieth-century Spanish anarchist movement provided a reflexive critique not only of the inequalities of the broader society but of the prejudices and failings still alive in the anarchist movement itself (Ackelsberg 2000, 2005; Espigado Tocino 2002; Nash 1975). More recent historic contributions range from involvement in feminist politics (Brown 1996; Dark Star Collective 2002) and gay liberation (Mecca 2009; Ording 2009) through to Alex Comfort's anarchist-inspired *The Joy of Sex*.

Anarchist histories are a rich resource for engaging with the question of how we live our lives. As Utah Phillips put it, 'the past didn't go anywhere' (in Phillips and DiFranco 1997). At the same time, part of the attraction and enduring relevance of anarchism is precisely its organic ability to adapt and evolve, incorporating new strategies and new fields of action. Such a revitalised anarchism has benefited from the emergence of two recent transformations of the geo-political landscape. Both have roots in anarchistic practice (as well as in anti-state Marxism, radical feminism and movements protagonised by indigenous demands for autonomy and control of land) and have rekindled interest in anarchism as a set of theoretical and practical resources to move towards a freer society. These two new currents are, first, poststructuralist thought and, second, the rise of global anti-capitalist movements.

Inspired at least in part by their participation in the anti-state, anti-capitalist uprisings of May 1968, the writing of figures such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari are becoming read as critical contributions to Western anarchist traditions (ASN 2010a; Rousselle and Evren 2011). While these readings are controversial, both because they have, at times, run the risk of setting up a straw figure of a simplistic 'classical anarchism' to be knocked down by a new and improved postanarchism (Cohn 2002; Cohn and Wilbur 2011) and because of the highly theoretical nature of these writings, controversy has been part of the energetic renewal

brought about through anarchist engagement with poststructuralist theories. From our perspectives, this wave of radical French theory complements rather than replaces lesser known anarchist theorists who have also had sophisticated and nuanced thoughts on the nature of power, subjectivity and revolution. Nonetheless, this minor revolution in anarchism is powerful, particularly because it is echoed and amplified through similar revolutions taking place in feminist, postcolonial and queer theories.

These theoretical developments have also been of particular value in inspiring and explaining the rise of directly democratic, horizontal networks of protest, community building and resistance to hierarchy variously referred to as the global justice movement, the movement of movements and the alterglobalisation movement. Inspired by a long history of direct action, including the Zapatista struggle for indigenous autonomy and the queer tactics of ACT-UP (Shepard 2002), the mass protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999 were the first globally visible manifestation of this movement; suddenly both scholars and popular commentators were asking how such a huge and powerful protest movement could be organised without a clearly defined leadership. While the existence of these movements cannot be conflated directly with anarchist thought and practice in any simple way, they do seek to construct organisations and activities outside of the formal parameters offered by neocolonial, Western or liberal notions of democracy. In doing so, these movements are learning to undermine the forms of gendered, racialised and sexualised violence intertwined with individualistic, hierarchical structures of democracy (e.g. Chen *et al.* 2011; Smith 2005) and to create, instead, autonomous spaces.

The critique offered by anarchism of party politics, of the inherent power relationship entailed by the representation of one group's supposed interests by another, unaccountable group, of the desire to homogenise rather than diversify – except within the context of pay-as-you-go fixed sexual and consumer identities – has garnered an analysis of sexuality and gender politics that has much in common with a third strand of contemporary theory and activism: queer. While anarchism traditionally has challenged borders based on nationality and hierarchies of class, the emerging queer theory of the early 1990s critiqued apparently stable orders of gendered and sexualised identity and strict borders of the body, sex and sexuality. Queer theory, radically reappraising the fixity of these discourses, has interrogated, in its feminist aspects, seemingly natural differences and hierarchies around sex. The practice of constant revision of the 'given', of comfortable notions of sex and body, and their political inherence articulated by queer theory and activism, has much in common with anarchism, with its critique of borders, hierarchies and naturalised differences. Further, if queer theory has developed out of the anti-statist thought of figures such as Michel Foucault, Giles Deleuze and the anti-identarianism of Judith Butler, and also out of the direct action politics of ACT-UP and other radical queer groups, and feminist critiques of gendered, racialised and classed hierarchies, then anarchist readings of, and contributions to, queer theory are clearly invaluable. In particular, the transnational (or anti-national) and anti-racist aspects of anarchism may help us address the pressing challenges of 'homonationalism' (Puar 2006) and 'silences in queerness/raciality' (Kuntsman and Miyake 2008) in these times of racialised war and the (white) resentment which fuels both war and other forms of disconnection and violence (see, e.g., APOC 2010; Lamble 2008; Veneuse 2009).

Based on an analysis of the ways in which power constructs discourses on sexuality and the possibility of their material expression, queer theory and anarchist thought provide a resetting of the equation of knowledge/power that aims to use reverse discourses and interstitial practices as possibilities to open up modes of life not based on hierarchical values. They are opportunities to develop, as Foucault suggested, 'non-fascist' ways of life (Foucault 2004), to develop a *chresis* or ethical practice of living whereby our lives are given meaning through the advocacy of democratic socialist principles lived in today's world. This is an active undertaking and, although we are constantly forced to choose, what we choose remains to some degree open. As two authors taking up Foucault's suggestion forcefully argue:

Whether we like it or not, we are obliged to choose, and every time we choose we give our lives meaning, since it depends on us to create the conditions whereby democratic socialism can be born with strength and vitality. Otherwise, we contribute with our passivity, with our submissive acceptance, or with means more direct, to the triumph of the fundamentalism of the market which will lead humanity once more to the frontiers of barbarism.

(Álvarez-Uría and Varela 1999:25; our translation)

Such an invitation to live a non-fascist way of life does not mean that sexuality becomes once more the 'secret' to be explored, the physical need to be experienced or the core feature of a liberated self, but a mobile surface from which to play with established identities, the limits of the body and the constraints of exclusionary identities such as 'gay', 'bi' and 'hetero'. It is, succinctly, a matter of 'which ways of understanding ourselves make it possible to act with some chance of bringing about positive changes' (Greenway 1997:180). The radical decentring of the way in which people can live their lives recognises that freedom cannot come through sex alone; rather it entails a critique that runs through all social relationships and attempts to reconstruct them in non-hierarchical terms.

Sexual anarchy?

Given the commonalities among certain historical and current strands of anarchism, and between anarchism, feminism and queer activism, it would appear that the time is ripe for an engaging intersection between these movements. It might be surprising, therefore, that there have been remarkably few publications that have paid attention to the overlaps and differences in these movements, outside a number of historical studies on anarchism and its links to women's movements or sex-reform programmes and scattered essays through movement literature.[2] While queer and feminist writing often has a strong critique of hierarchy and the state, if not an outright anti-state stance, anarchist sources have rarely been included (e.g. Alexander 2005; Anzaldúa 1987; Brown 1995; Butler and Spivak 2007; Cooper 1994; Mohanty 2003; Seidman 1997; Winnubst 2006; for recent and notable exceptions, see Fahs 2010; Jeppesen 2010; Kissack 2008; Portwood-Stacer 2010; Roseneil 2000; Rowbotham 2008; Shannon and Willis 2010; Shepard 2010; Wilkinson 2009; Windpassinger 2010; and, to a lesser extent, Monro 2005). Of course, inspiration for a libertarian politics can easily be found outside anarchist traditions. In other cases, anarchist sources may be difficult to acknowledge in academic writing (see hooks 1994 for a discussion of the politics of citation). For example, during a lecture in London, Judith Butler acknowledged the inspiration she took from anarchist and syndicalist movements and her desire for their growth, referring, with a mischievous grin, to her appreciation of anarchism as 'a confession' (Butler 2007). Similarly, a number of recent books on contemporary anarchism which we find deeply inspiring in other ways contain little or no reference to topics of sexuality (Amster *et al.* 2009; Franks 2006; Gordon 2008; Kinna 2005). Perhaps these silences are due, in part, to the intense emotional responses that sex and anarchy can trigger, sometimes with violent consequences. What makes the intersections of anarchism and sexuality potentially *exciting* also makes them *dangerous*. Challenging established identities, questioning notions of family and society and even the very idea of what constitutes 'sex' (as both an activity and with respect to what are considered to be biological truths of male and female) can dramatically undercut the foundations of established ways of relating to ourselves, each other and the world. Some will experience this as profoundly liberating, others as deeply disturbing. Most of us will perhaps have a powerful mixture of feelings.

It is in facing the challenges of engaging with the emotionally charged topic of anarchism and sexuality that we find an understanding of anarchism as an ethics of relationships most inspiring. How might those of us advocating sexual anarchy empathise with the anger and fear of others (as well as with our own)? Can anarchist(ic) practices of restorative justice (e.g. Amster 2004; Gaarder 2009; Sullivan and Tifft 2001; Tifft and Sullivan 1980) and violence prevention (e.g. Tifft 1993) respond to understandable desires for order and security in societies where (sexual) violence is all too common? Can an ethic of care in practices of mutual aid create unexpected solidarities? Might even sexual and religious minorities form coalitions based on their shared experiences of state violence (Butler 2004, 2008; INCITE! 2006)? How can difficult questions about power and sexuality in everyday life be opened up for discussion in ways that nurture freedom, equality and community? How might a focus on sexuality, passion and desire help us rethink our way around 'other' issues such as economics (Bedford and Jakobsen 2009; Perelman 2000), ecology (Heller 1999; Mortimer-Sandilands 2005) and power (Foucault 1990; Lorde 1993)? In what ways might sexual anarchy be practised? In other words, how might freedom be queered (Winnubst 2006)?

Out of our desire to create space to open up some of these questions about the intersections between anarchism and sexuality, we organised a conference in Leeds, England, in November 2006. Most of the contributions to this volume derive from this event, having been presented there or having been penned as reflections on the conference at a later date.[3] The rhizomic nature of the conference – with its introduction, multiple sessions, discussion circles, social events, Quaker-style closing plenary, trips to the Common Place social centre and delicious experiences of sharing food – is reflected in this rhizome of a book; the pieces it contains connect with each other in innumerable ways, all exploring ethics, relationships and power. Within the loose structure we created at the Leeds conference, we witnessed participants putting into practice anarchism as an ethics of relationship. Part of this involved an open-mindedness to recasting and even demolishing the supposed divide between academia and activism. Beset with prejudices or at least *partis pris* on both sides (some time after the Leeds event we witnessed at a similar conference the admission of one activist who had begun writing his PhD that now he was in academia, activism was ruled out), after some initial scepticism lodged between the 'usual passive absorption typical of academic conferences' and 'at worst an encounter with the kinds of social policing so common in queer spaces' (Chapter 11, p. 224), one conference participant, Kristina N. Weaver, who reflects on her experience in this book, was captivated by 'the truths expressed, the stories witnessed, the theories spun' (p. 224). Drawing on a variety of participation techniques, such as small group discussions including 'the fish bowl' technique, for Weaver now 'a treasured tool in my kit of anarchist praxis' (p. 226), paper sessions blended academic presentations with anarchist commitments to listening, difference and equality. Kristina was referring to the 'Queer autonomous zones' session, in which Serena Bassi, Mike Upton and Gavin Brown presented papers. Gavin also reflects on that session in his contribution (Chapter 10), acknowledging the fear of presenting a theoretical account of activist events to an audience including activists. He then goes on to refer to the discussion that followed the papers, in the form of the fish bowl, as 'by far the most engaged and inclusive discussion I have experienced at an academic conference in the last decade' (p. 200). We share this appreciation of the Leeds conference and its form less to boost our own egos (always a risk) and more to invite further experimentation, gentleness and playfulness in the organisation of conferences and other shared spaces.

This book, too, is a shared space. We've attempted to be gentle and playful in its organisation. Offering a shift in register between the more or less traditional scholarly prose of chapters, a scattering of poems dance between chapters. An anonymous haiku poses a startling question about identity (p. 23). Eco-feminist erotics in the poetry of Helen Moore invite us to reconsider our relationships with food and nature, bodies and pleasures (p. 67–8, 182–3). J. Fergus Evans' poetic manifesto playfully and seriously questions gay identity and the connections between sex and revolution (p. 181–2). And Tom Leonard offers a powerful reminder that the violence of war is the rule, rather than the exception, in a male-dominated society (p. 101–2).

Also addressing these themes, the first substantive chapter of the book (Chapter 2) returns to anarchism's historical past in order to reassess the prison writings of Russian–American anarchist Alexander Berkman, the companion of the better known anarchist firebrand Emma Goldman. Jenny Alexander highlights not only how Goldman has eclipsed activist and scholarly attention on Berkman (except for the reasons he was sent to prison in the first place, as a result of an assassination attempt on factory owner Frick) but also how the issues that Goldman campaigned on – female emancipation, birth control and the equality of the sexes – have also obscured Berkman's radical appraisal of same-sex desire as depicted in his *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912). Using the history of 'first wave' anarchism as a resource to comment on past debates on homosexuality and current assessments of masculinity, desire and queer sexuality, Alexander disinters the significance of Berkman's prison experience, placing it in the context of the time and bringing to light not just the gripping narrative provided in Berkman's *Memoirs*. Alexander also shows, through a careful analysis of the text, how Berkman came to the realisation that society's prejudices against male–male love were unjust and also how his own preconceptions on the matter were dissolved as he experienced such love as part of prison life. Berkman is as taken aback about this as his contemporary readers would have been. The 'openly tender' relationship that emerges between Berkman and a fellow inmate he calls 'kiddie' (the prison slang 'kid' meaning 'catamite') reveals how love can

flower even in the harshest of environments. The fact that no sex acts are depicted in the *Memoirs*, that no clear 'gay' identity is formed in his writing, has contributed to the neglect of Berkman's work in anarchist and queer circles. But, from a queer perspective, as part of a continuum of desire, neither fixed nor necessarily completely free-ranging, Berkman's words are inspiring for their potentiality for change and for moving beyond divides between hetero- and homosexual desire and identity. In an age which has been qualified as one of 'liquid love' by Zygmunt Bauman, we need to reconsider how desires, intimacies and sex might relate to one another without imposing a hierarchy of values that forces subjects to assume these as fixed or as more or less consequential. Berkman, nearly one hundred years ago, provides us with some routes towards such a reconsideration.

A reconsideration or re-evaluation of what intimacy could mean within the context of necessary solidarities, especially within current feminist and queer struggles such as wages for housework, is presented by Stevphen Shukaitis (in Chapter 3) as a reconfiguration of how effectiveness in struggle should not take place at the expense of 'affect', or a feeling of commonality and affection towards participants in any particular movement. It is not, Stevphen argues, a question of how effective – that is, how efficient, organised or streamlined – any action or movement should be, but rather how 'affective' it can be in terms of generating resistance to relations of power and building new types of relationship between those who resist. But the author's critique goes further: affectiveness is a crucial element in these struggles, not least in order to make the struggle more effective, but as a means of reconfiguring social relationships in the here and now. This characteristic of anarchism, present in historical movements too in the form of anarchist affinity groups, aims to provide a critique of the social and political relationship as instrumentalist, impersonal and utilitarian. As Shukaitis states: 'Affective resistance starts from the realization that one can ultimately never separate questions of the *effectiveness* of political organizing from concerns about its *affectiveness*' (p. 46). In order to explore this in more detail, Shukaitis takes the example of the anti-capitalist women's organisation *Precarias a la Deriva* as an example of how precariousness and subordination in the socio-economic field *and* within movements for change can be partially arrested by attending to the affectiveness of the participants in the struggle. Thus, a focus by social movements on the traditional subject, the male industrial worker, on the traditional workplace and on traditional issues, is displaced by multiple socio-economic identities that arise from a convergence of social, political and sexual resistances that affectiveness is crucial to. Such a realisation gave rise in the *Precarias*' thought to the concept of 'bio-syndicalism', a strategy that posits a 'caring strike' that would pay attention to the specific realities and subject positions in which people find themselves in terms of the labour they provide, and which would allow for caring for different workers' needs according to their own gendered and sexualised positions.

Tracing other currents of autonomous feminism, Lena Eckert (in Chapter 4), by means of a focus on the 'micro-political' psychological level, the level of subjectivity and the symbolic, articulates an analysis of how power becomes entrenched in every microcosm of daily life, including our notions of sex, the body and sexuality. She argues, by assessing the usability of Lacan's work on the symbolism of the phallus, Foucault's understanding of the 'technologies' of the self and postanarchism's anti-foundational critique, that since symbolic or psychological 'powers' are diffuse and operate everywhere, they require a form of resistance that is equally 'everywhere'. Eckert thus calls into question the symbolic function of the phallus and its role in the theorisation of subjectivity and the conceptualisation of gender, the body and sex/ual difference, and posits, following the work of Beatriz Preciado, Judith Butler and Donna Haraway, an eroticisation of the body in all its parts, a decentring of the symbolism of the phallus, and a reconsideration of the hierarchies of pleasure. By drawing further on some of Max Stirner's, Saul Newman's and Gilles Deleuze's work, the anarchistic project with respect to sexuality and desire would be one of 'the constant process of becoming *not* oneself' (p. 73) as a way of radically revising what is understood as sexuality, notions of male and female and hetero/homosexuality. Such fluidity chimes with postanarchist understandings of a lack of fixed identities, and queer studies' opposition to fixed sexual desires and normativities.

Questions of gender, sexuality and power are further explored in an interview with Judith Butler (Chapter 5). Here she contrasts a Western gay libertarianism with various forms of queer

anarchism. Whereas the former is recruited by and affiliated with the state in order to secure positions of privilege without regard to racialised state violence, the latter seek to undermine all hierarchies. She also plays with binaries and resists the temptation to draw a clear line between being inside or outside the state, for or against the law. Rather, she points to the fragility of any given legal code or regime and its possible subversion or even dissolution in favour of popular sovereignty. Linking Benjamin and Althusser with Anarchists Against the Wall, and the Zapatista encuentros (global gatherings of activists against neoliberalism) with everyday questions of dignity and survival, this interview demonstrates the possibility and value of queering the border between activist and scholar. Alongside the other contributions in this volume it might also, we hope, stimulate a greater engagement between contemporary feminist theory and (post)anarchism.

Highlighting the arbitrary nature of given regimes of race, gender, sexuality and law, and their impacts on human beings and other lifeforms constitutes a major element of political science fiction and fantasy literature. Ursula Le Guin, for one, performs a radical revisioning of what many a reader may have originally found static or unquestionable. By means of her poetry and prose she moves us to places that can be both inspiring and uncomfortable. Laurence Davis (in Chapter 6) demonstrates how Le Guin can help us imagine our lives and make them up as a defence against authoritarian constraints and in order to avoid 'our lives get[ting] made up for us by other people' (Le Guin 2004:208). Davis explores how love and revolution are intertwined and connected in Le Guin's almost entirely neglected science fiction 'story suite' *Four Ways to Forgiveness* (1995), and argues, following Bookchin and others, that if anarchism is worth anything it implies a revolution of and in everyday life. In contrast to many traditional Marxist or socialist movements, part of this revolution for anarchism has to do with the way love and sexual relationships are lived out on a day-to-day basis. Over four interconnected stories, this book explores betrayal, forgiveness, political form, social revolution and love. Love and sexuality – of whatever stripe – are represented in Le Guin's work not as an 'add-on' or something tangential to her novelistic work but as something integral, urgent and fundamental. Le Guin explores how jealousy, deceit, rigidly bound notions of the natural and gender expectations can be transformed by an uncompromising commitment to the interplay and mutual determinacy between the form of revolutionary expression or action and romantic love. Power is seen as something not to be seized by a violent revolutionary movement, but dissolved, nullified, as Davis notes, as part of 'a patient, constructive, organic and open-ended form of revolutionary practice ultimately rooted in a transformation of the individual spirit' (p. 114).

Lewis Call's chapter (Chapter 7) continues the theme of reading science fiction, this time by African–American authors Octavia Butler and Samuel Delaney, to explore topics both uncomfortable and inspirational in order to imagine our lives differently. Unlike Le Guin, neither Butler nor Delaney has associated themselves with anarchism. Nonetheless, their efforts to subvert hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality and even genre show a clear affinity with her work and other anarchist intersectional analyses of power. Like *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, slavery is a central theme in Octavia Butler's *Patternist* and Samuel Delany's *Nevèrÿon* books. However, in Lewis' reading, the tales of Butler and Delaney are not describing a dissolution of power but rather a playing with power. They contrast consensual, desired and erotic forms of playing with power (i.e. BDSM) with the unethical, non-erotic, non-consensual, undesired and unplayful practices of power that characterise both slavery as historic institution and its descendant – the modern political economy of state capitalism. Bringing together Foucauldian theory with contemporary writing on sadomasochism to read the shifting play of power in these novels, Lewis refers to this particular strategy for healing the psychic wounds of slavery as an example of what he calls 'postanarchist kink' (p. 132). Like Lena's, Lewis' postanarchist approach is less interested in the immediate abolition of dominant relations and discourses and more interested in their ongoing *subversion*. And, like Jenny Alexander's discussion of sexual borderlands and Gavin Brown's linking of queer with a permaculturist's appreciation of ecological edges, Lewis' chapter emphasises the value of working from the margins. He is also careful to recognise that the marginal position of erotic sadomasochism, as a line of flight, does not necessarily lead to freedom. It, too, can be caught in another 'structure of desire': that of liberal individualism and a minority identity politics dependent on the very power structures it claims to reject. Neither is his analysis limited to the sexual play of power. In our efforts to

enact anarchist forms of a potentially hierarchical relationship, that of author and editor, we, too, have found ourselves playing with power.

Both anarchism and queer studies have paid attention to questions of youth and to troubling the relationship between sexuality and youth. Anarchism, historically, has viewed young people not only as a logical and fertile constituency for its ideas of emancipation (see, for example, Kropotkin's 'An Appeal to the Young', in Baldwin 1970:260–82, originally published in 1880; or Paul Goodman's 1956 classic *Growing up Absurd*), but has also placed great store on attempting to revolutionise youth sexuality by means of a struggle for access to accurate 'scientific' sexual knowledge, as a site where relations between men and women can be transformed and for ready usage of simple materials such as birth control devices. However, anarchism historically has tended to reify categories of maleness and femaleness and has rarely considered homosexuality as a legitimate form of expression alongside heterosexuality. Intertwining these concerns with the power of storytelling demonstrated by Laurence Davis and Lewis Call, Jamie Heckert (Chapter 8) explores questions of educating youth about sex and sexuality while engaging with feminist theory and (post)anarchism. Telling his own 'sexual stories', relating domestic violence and growing up 'different' in an apparently sexually monochrome world, Jamie opens up a path for listening to himself and others as part of the realisation of erotic and anarchic desires. Intensely personal and deeply political, the form of storytelling developed here queers scholarship. Interweaving snippets of autobiography with poetry and political theory, his chapter engages with very practical questions about teaching sex education, doing scholarship and being a political activist while at the same time exploring questions of identity, temporality, embodiment, ethics and emotion. More importantly, it is written from the heart. Working from the insight that hierarchy depends on (a fantasy of) separation, Jamie highlights the centrality of connection, of love, for anarchism, for sex education with young people and for all other relationships. This, he notes, need not be postponed until after the revolution. Love occurs only in the present; the experience of presence is part of the always becoming-revolution.

While the other contributors have based most of their accounts on the capitalist West and long-industrialised countries, part of the remit of the Leeds conference was to explore anarchist discourse and practice in other regions, not least the former 'communist' bloc. Cut off from their own anarchist histories of the early twentieth century, current Eastern European anarchist movements have had to engage in a process of historical and self-discovery to recuperate and (re)construct their organisations along new lines. The Czech anarchist movement re-emerged in the 1980s under the banner of several organisations, some national, some local. Marta Kolářová (in Chapter 9) analyses the reception of debates on sexuality in the Czech anarchist movement and finds not only that the subject area has been under-theorised but that it has generally been neglected. In contrast to some other movements traced in these pages, not least sections of the early twentieth-century North American movement discussed by Jenny Alexander, and some of the newer anarchisms outlined in Stevphen Shukaitis' chapter, the Czech movement appears to have favoured concentration on economic issues and industrial organisation and has only very recently broached issues such as feminism and gay rights. Despite this concentration, Marta identifies numerous strands within the anarchist movement, particulary anarcho-feminist currents, that have taken on board the interconnections between economic, social and sexual exploitation and oppression. While such dimensions have not necessarily come smoothly to other parts of the movement, a discourse and practice responding to what we might call intersectionality has slowly made headway in the Czech movement. Such a convergence has, in part, been due to external factors rather than the ideological realisation that sexuality is an issue that deserves attention. As a result of increased fascist activity, anarchists have been the target of violence. In addition, anarcho-feminists and LGBTQs have suffered violence, individually or during Queer Parades, at the hands of fascists. Such violence has resulted in an increasing cooperation between anarchists and queers, with anarchists on one occasion acting as security (in the absence of the state police) on a gay parade. While this has been largely one-way, according to Kolářová, it can but strengthen the anarchist movement in the Czech Republic and it presages an ongoing engagement with intersectional approaches that can enrich anarchism and the social movements it comes into contact with.

Returning to Anglophone contexts, Gavin Brown's contribution (Chapter 10) links a series of case studies in queer autonomous geography to the theme of amateurism and DIY politics. The anarchist tradition has long acknowledged the entwining of knowledge/power attributed to Foucault. Thus, the questioning of authority claims is not limited to the 'political' but includes all forms of expertise. Bakunin wrote:

In the matter of boots I refer to the authority of the bootmakers; concerning houses, canals or railroads I consult that of the architect or engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the savant to impose his [sic] authority upon me. I accept them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure.

(Bakunin, cited in Kinna 2005:70)

And Bakunin himself is treated similarly. As Juliet Paredes of Mujeres Creando, a Bolivian anarcha-feminist group, said, 'I've said it and I'll say it again that we're not anarchists by Bakunin or the CNT [Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour)], but rather by our grandmothers, and that's a beautiful school of anarchism' (Paredes 2002:112). Likewise, several of the examples Gavin draws upon might also be considered beautiful schools of anarchism with no links to Bakunin or the expertise of 'activists', whereas others take only what they need from contemporary anarchism's 'hybrid genealogy' (Gordon 2005:9). From Queer Pagan Camp to a cruisy urban public toilet to nightclubs and Queeruptions, Brown takes us on a whirlwind tour of experiments in autonomous social relations. In doing so, he not only highlights possible queer futures but also the other-than-state, other-than-capitalist spaces which always exist outside official discourses of reality and the possible. He also reminds us that drawing a border between autonomous and non-autonomous spaces is always a fiction. Hierarchies are never spaces of perfect control; autonomous or anarchist spaces are always works in progress, continually learning to let go of hierarchy, continually learning to relate to each other as equals. More important than any anarcho-perfection are the complex, messy and often joyful experiences of learning through doing, directly, together. For Gavin Brown, '[q]ueer is an ethical process' (p. 203) and one which creates very different possibilities to the binaries and hierarchies of official intimacies, genders, sexualities and political economies. It is also one which may undermine the stories of 'not good enough' that one of our (Jamie's) pieces (Chapter 8) reminds us are all too common in academic, activist and other spaces. Finally, the chapter highlights the power of ritual in knitting together community. Whether explicitly labelled as such, by the queer pagans, or as implicitly shared understanding, ritual can offer a particular focus for experiencing together the joys and pains of being alive.

The book concludes with Kristina N. Weaver (Chapter 11) sharing her experiences of an experimental 'structure of desire' utilised in the conference. Like Gavin, she reminds us that this conference, too, was a queer autonomous space and one with wide-reaching consequences for her. While telling her own story, Kristina draws our attention to the reality that every event we organise, every relationship we have, creates ripples of fresh possibilities.

Notes

1 For a more detailed analysis of the etymology and actual uses of the word 'anarkhia' in ancient Greece, see Gordon 2006. Here he suggests that Antigone, That 'long-standing inspiration to feminists' is also 'the first-ever anarchist' (Gordon 2006:88).
2 For an extensive bibliography, see ASN 2010b.
3 Lewis Call was invited to contribute his chapter at a later date. One of us (Jamie) contributed a chapter following an anarchist sex education workshop during the conference. Likewise, the poems and the interview with Judith Butler were later additions.

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Poetic interlude 1

To define ourselves

we all create the 'other'.

What's another way?
—Anonymous

Chapter 2

Alexander Berkman

Sexual dissidence in the first wave anarchist movement and its subsequent narratives

Jenny Alexander

Once upon a time, people who knew the way were subtle, spiritual, mysterious, penetrating, unfathomable.

—Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* (p. 23)

This chapter looks at the autobiography of Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912), which covers his prison experience from 1892 to 1906 in Allegheny Penitentiary, Pennsylvania. I want to explore the present-day discourses surrounding this autobiography, alongside those surrounding the autobiography of his rather more famous anarchist comrade, Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (1931). I am interested in how these texts continue to be interpreted and utilised by anarchists and scholars, specifically in relation to questions of sexuality. I also want to suggest my own particular contribution to re-reading Alexander Berkman in the service of a dynamic anarcho-affective praxis.

Berkman, long-term political comrade of Emma Goldman, was a Russian/ Lithuanian/Jewish immigrant to the United States. He was an impassioned political idealist, who, in his early twenties, planned the murder of the strike-breaking steel magnate Henry Clay Frick as an *attentat* (a politically motivated murder for propaganda purposes), hoping that it would inspire the steel workers then under siege at Homestead to rise up and act as the spark that would ignite the social revolution. He shot and wounded Frick, who survived, and his autobiography covers the fourteen years of incarceration served for that act. Emma Goldman, who was a party to the plot (hatched in their Worcester, Massachusetts, ice-cream parlour), publicly defended his attempt. *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* was begun by Berkman some three years after his release. 'Back issues' of the underground newspaper *Prison Blossoms*, which he had managed to produce clandestinely whilst inside and copies of which were kept for him by Goldman, assisted the ordering in his memory of times and incidents.[1]

'The anarchist literature of the past weighs heavily on the present and makes it hard for us to produce new literature for the future', says Steve Millett in a review of the academic journal *Anarchist Studies* in *Democracy and Nature* (Millett 1997). It is worth engaging with his point. 'Historical memory is a theatre of autonomous struggles'[2] and so historical understanding should be a crucial component of grassroots activisms. Nevertheless, one might ask, do we need to return again and yet again to the writings of 'first wave' anarchists?

Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman are richly documented as anarchist figures of note. Their footprints mark the highways and byways of hundreds of related sites on the web today, from the scholarly, such as *The Emma Goldman Papers*, curated at Berkeley under Dr Candace Falk, to the scholar-activist, such as *The Anarchy Archives* set up by Dana Ward, Professor of Political Studies at Pitzer College, in 1995. You can even watch a clip of Emma interviewed on an old Paramount newsreel of the 1930s (at the time of writing this seems to have been removed from YouTube but is archived via Video-surf).[3] This exhaustive documentation and re-remembrance of the lives and work of Goldman and Berkman online, mostly disseminated from the United States, could be said to contribute to 'the construction of anarchism as Western', and to a 'eurocentrism that has permeated the writings of many second and third wave [anarchist] theorists and writers', as Jason Adams suggests in his paper 'Non-Western Anarchisms' (Adams 2002). This problem of Western-centrism pervades the internet with respect to all knowledge forms, access being unevenly distributed, as we know, according to global economic inequalities. Acknowledging that, my chapter *is* nevertheless consciously situated in relation to the encounter between anarchisms and sexualities specifically within Western late capitalism.

I want to look at the ways in which anarchist and scholarly communities have read and continue to read Emma Goldman's and Alexander Berkman's autobiographical writings since

the 1960s and 1970s, with particular reference to questions of sexuality. I want to ask how it is that these readings continue to contribute significantly to discourses within and around anarchism and sexuality, particularly because Berkman and Goldman have been treated rather differently in relation to this subject.

Oz Frankel has written a nuanced account of the 'iconisation' of Emma Goldman since the 1930s, of her adoption as a heroic figure by multiple constituencies, particularly in the USA but also internationally, from libertarian liberals to radical feminists. In an article called 'Whatever Happened to "Red Emma"?' (Frankel 1996), he explores the many faces in circulation of a celebretised Goldman. Indeed, her life and writings continue in the twenty-first century to be widely re-circulated in anarchist and scholarly material on- and offline, *particularly* in connection with feminism and sexuality – a legacy of her adoption by the second wave of feminism.

Today Goldman is also referenced significantly on anarcha-activist sites specifically concerned with gender and sexuality. For example Toronto-based anarcho-queer group Limpfist's website names just two anarchist theorists in their 'Links' section – Noam Chomsky and Emma Goldman. Anarcha.org, an online collection of resources on anarcha-feminism, contains contemporary writings by the likes of Wendy O'Matik and Jamie Heckert in their 'Sex and Sexuality' section (under 'Health and Healing'). It also posts links to two of Emma Goldman's essays, 'Anarchy and the Sex Question' (1896) and 'Marriage and Love' (1911).

Of all her writings, Goldman's autobiography *Living My Life* has in particular been addressed within the academy and the mainstream, autobiography and biography being historically bourgeois forms. Many academic studies of Goldman engage extensively with the autobiography and related private correspondence (e.g. Falk 1990 [1984] and Wexler 1986). But it does also appear in activist and teaching resources online too. For example, sections are reproduced on John Simkin's left-leaning UK-based resource Spartacus Educational (2010) and also indeed on Wikiquote. It is linked on infoshop.org (2010), the anarchist Alternative Media Project based in Kansas, and reproduced in entirety on the Anarchy Archives.

The relationship between Goldman's personal life and her politics is frequently highlighted, by both activist and scholarly writing about her. For example, Lori Jo Marso, writing in the academic journal *Feminist Theory*, argues that

it is not solely Goldman's political life that makes her important for us to study today. Rather, it is the intersection of her life with her thought, specifically her intimate and sexual life as studied in conjunction with her essays on marriage, sex, love, women's emancipation and femininity.

(Marso 2003:305–6)

Another article, by Anna Propos of Irvington High School California's Anarchist Student Union, 'To the Daring Belongs the Future: The Anarcha Feminist Movement' (Propos n.d.) specifically approaches Goldman's political position on homosexuality with reference to her friendships with the lesbian editor of *The Little Review*, Margaret Anderson, and with fellow activist (also a lesbian) Almeda Sperry, Goldman's sometime passionate correspondent.

Unlike his long-term political comrade, Alexander Berkman is not commonly linked to questions of anarchism and sexuality. He is known and his life and work continue to be memorialised and disseminated today in anarchist and scholarly resources on- and offline, for his *ABC of Anarchism*, for his opposition to the suppression of the Krondstadt revolt, for his assassination attempt on Henry Clay Frick, and finally for his relationship with Goldman. Left US historian Howard Zinn, in the forward to the latest edition of *Life of an Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader* (Fellner 2005), which reproduces the autobiography, calls Berkman a 'lost hero' of American radicalism but does not mention sexuality. Spartacus Educational mentions his autobiography but not its content. Wikipedia has an entry for *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* but again no mention of sexuality. The anarchist zine *A Practical Guide to Prisoner Support*, by Kirsten Anderberg (2001), cited on a number of US anarcho-activist sites, recommends several books to prisoners, including *All Things Censored* (1998) by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Berkman's *Prison Memoirs* (reviewed on Phoenix Anarchist Coalition website by Sallydarity), but without any discussion of Berkman's treatment of same-sex love and desire. The International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, which holds the Alexander Berkman papers, has a more specific reference to Berkman's chapter 'On Homosexuality in Prison' in the 'Introduction' section on their website, but even this is only in passing.

These examples of activist and scholarly interpretation are exemplary of the different ways in which Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman tend to be discussed in relation to anarchism

and sexuality. What Alexander Berkman had to say about sexuality is given the occasional very brief acknowledgement, whilst Goldman's entire political oeuvre is frequently shoehorned into a gender/ sexuality boot (and very much linked to her personal life). It is not difficult to see why this is problematic. Questions of gender and sexuality in these re-circulated readings remain and return as the concerns of women/feminisms and LGBTQ agendas linked to/coming out of feminisms, whilst questions of 'general anarchism' remain and return as the concerns of a 'mainstream' (read straight and masculine) anarchist movement. Meanwhile, Berkman's writing on matters of same-sex attachment is given concentrated attention in Jonathan Katz's *Gay American History* (1978), which reproduces extensive excerpts from *Prison Memoirs of An Anarchist*, but Katz does not comment on them in the context of anarchist politics.

What *did* Alexander Berkman have to say about sexuality? Unlike Emma Goldman, who lectured and wrote widely on the subject, sexuality was not a driving political theme of his outside his autobiography. Nevertheless, he devotes significant attention to same-sex intimacy in *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, and without doubt this is a consciously political text, as would be expected from a lifelong political activist. In the late nineteenth century in Britain and the United States, access for the chattering classes to the brutality of prison life (for those not involved in reform work) was likely to be through works of fiction, such as Dickens' novels or Dostoevsky's fictionalised autobiography *Memoirs from the House of the Dead* (1861–2). However, first-hand accounts from British and American gaols, such as Michael Davitt's *Leaves from a Prison Diary* (1885), were beginning to emerge, impacting on calls for prison reform. Anarchist autobiographical accounts of prison (notably Berkman's, Goldman's and Kropotkin's) were among the first texts in the West to call for prison *abolition* – a position adopted by anarchists ever since.

Unsurprisingly, as an anarchist, Berkman challenged the authority of the prison. He documents his attempts to alert the outside world to prison conditions, to stand up for fellow inmates and to communicate with the anarchist press. These were severely punished, and he details time spent in solitary on starvation rations, and even confined to a straitjacket. The text (re-)creates for us a struggle in the terrain of power and the body; between a dis-identified 'bad subject' (Althusser 2006 [1970]) and the repressive apparatus of the state. Berkman's decision to write about desire and passionate affection between men in his autobiography, therefore, was certainly also a consciously political decision.

Berkman was an anarchist committed (until much later in his life) to violent terrorism as a revolutionary strategy. He was also someone with a painfully strong conscience and a stubborn will. The book is narrated in the present tense, but the political self which the text depicts is not static. The book takes the reader through the mental development of fourteen years. This literary device is ideologically powerful. The reader is enjoined/seduced/required to identify with the protagonist, following the intellectual and emotional adjustments that unfold, as if at first hand. Thus the reader is rendered susceptible (as a conscious political device) to adopting or mirroring these adjustments as they progress through the book, in other words to being what Althusser, in his famous essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (2006 [1970]), called 'ideologically interpellated'.

The young Berkman portrayed at the start of *Prison Memoirs* is idealistic, new to America and steeped in the Russian tradition of revolutionary action. He consciously models himself on Rakhmetov, the Nihilist hero of Nikolai Chernyshevsky's political novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), an individual who moulds his life to fit his ideals with stern ideological purity. Berkman depicts himself as emotionally distanced from the working classes whom he idealises. The interior monologue that the autobiographer attributes to his younger self begins 'I am a revolutionist first, man afterwards' (Berkman 1970 [1912]: 10) and continues: 'A being who has neither personal desires nor interests above the Cause! I am simply a revolutionist, a terrorist by conviction, an instrument of furthering the cause of humanity' (ibid.: 12).

The autobiography takes the reader through a series of mental states (again all written in the present tense) that depict the psychological struggle of Berkman-the-protagonist, at sea within his own terms of reference. A gradual transmogrification, from anarchist puritanism to a solidarity that extends beyond anarchist comrades and ideational representations of the 'honest' working classes, and finally embraces his flawed but human fellow inmates, is spelled out for the reader by an autobiographer using himself as an object lesson in social perspective:

I recall with sadness the first years of my imprisonment and my coldly impersonal valuation of social victims. There is

Evans, the aged burglar, smiling at me from the line ... With the severe intellectuality of the revolutionary tradition, I thought of him and his kind as inevitable fungus growths, the rotten fruit of a decaying society ... But the threads of comradeship have slowly been woven by common misery. The touch of sympathy has discovered the man beneath the criminal ... Not entirely in vain are the years of suffering that have wakened my kinship with the humanity of *les misérables*, whom social stupidity has cast into the valley of death.

(Berkman 1970 [1912]: 409)

As well as a consciousness shift regarding the constitution of criminality, a move towards solidarity with fellow inmates, and the emotional and physical drama of an ideologically driven (traumatic and unbending) resistance to state power, Berkman takes the reader through another major thought revision, the one which most concerns us here, regarding homosexuality. Homosexuality at this time, of course, was considered in popular and dominant discourses to be another form of criminality and degeneracy. Pre-1930s, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* was unique in its frankness concerning sex practices in prison in the United States and Britain – an area of prison life still often invisible today in official discourses and policies surrounding incarceration. The book was published by Goldman's Mother Earth press because, as she records, she could not find a publisher who would take it unexpurgated; some wanted to 'leave out the anarchist part', whilst others insisted on 'eliminating the chapters relating to homosexuality in prison' (Goldman 1988 [1931]: 483–4). At the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle* there was no public debate whatsoever about sex between prison inmates, although there was some coverage in specialist legal and medical texts. Internally, the rampant fact of these relations was sometimes dealt with by attempts to segregate known homosexuals from other prisoners. Joseph F. Fishman records that, at the turn of the century,

in the Federal Penitentiary of Levenworth, the barbarous practice of putting a large yellow 'D' (to indicated degenerate) on the backs of prisoners actually discovered in an act of homosexuality was pursued in an effort to stamp out the practice. It was of course unsuccessful.

(Fishman 1935:99)

Berkman's account of prison homosexuality is delivered to the reader as a road to Damascus experience. Berkman offers us himself at twenty-one, a raw recruit to prison life, completely ignorant of the possibility of sexual intimacy between same-sex individuals. He describes his bewilderment when 'Boston Red', professional thief and man of the road, offers him, in the prison workshops, the chance to become his 'kid'. 'How can you love a boy?' the young Berkman gawps, and Boston Red replies (the authorial Berkman fully conscious of the twinkle that must have been present in the older lag's eye), 'Ever read Billy Shakespeare?' (Berkman 1970 [1912]: 180).

The young Berkman, the older Berkman records, is astounded: 'You actually confess to such terrible practices? You're disgusting. But I don't really believe it Red' (ibid.: 183). Four years later, the text recounts, in a chapter titled 'Love's Dungeon Flower',Berkmanfinds himself locked in one of the underground punishment cells for attempting to alert prison investigators to conditions at Allegheny. Johnny Davis, a young prisoner, is in the cell next to him. Another prisoner, 'Dutch' Adams, had been boasting that Davis was his sexual property, and Davis had stabbed him. Over the days, Berkman and Davis exchange whispered histories. They begin to call each other by intimate 'other' names – 'Sashenka' for Berkman and 'Filipe' for Johnny. Berkman re-creates his state of mind autobiographically (as always, in the present tense): 'The springs of affection well up within me, as I lie huddled on the stone floor, cold and hungry. With closed eyes, I picture the boy before me, with his delicate face, and sensitive girlish lips' (ibid.: 336).

The two become 'openly tender and affectionate', and Berkman records that he refers to Davis somewhat ambiguously as 'kiddie' in conversation ('kid' being the prison term for catamite). For his part 'Filipe' confesses how much, if it were possible, he would like to kiss 'Sashenka' and Berkman writes of an 'unaccountable sense of joy' (ibid.: 337). No further intimacy is recorded until Berkman describes his immense sorrow at 'Filipe's' death, when he was found hanging in his cell some three months later.

There was another young man, later during the prison years, with whom, Berkman writes, he formed an intense protective friendship – one Russell Schroger. He also died, given a lethal spinal injection by accident in the infirmary. When Berkman heard news of the accident he smashed his hand in his cell door to gain access to the hospital and his dying friend.

Berkman-the-autobiographer wants us to know that Alexander Berkman changed in prison, from a young man shocked and disgusted by homosexual acts to an older man loving and losing two young men to death. He makes a point of recording that change, setting down a re-

creation of a conversation he had near the end of his prison term, with fellow inmate 'Doctor George'. First, they discuss Oscar Wilde, 'the brilliant English [sic] man-of-letters, whom the world of cant and stupidity has driven to prison and to death because his sex life did not conform to accepted standards' (ibid.: 451). Then Doctor George tells Berkman how he fell in love with, and eventually made love to, a young man during a previous prison sentence. He asks Berkman if his feelings for the boy were 'viciousness or what?' (ibid.: 457). Berkman writes himself as replying:

George, I think it a very beautiful emotion. Just as beautiful as love for a woman. I had a friend here, his name was Russell, perhaps you remember him. I felt no physical passion towards him, but I think I loved him with all my heart. His death was a most terrible shock to me. It almost drove me insane.

(Berkman 1970 [1912]: 453)

Berkman, along with Goldman, was, through his autobiography, one of the first well-known political figures in America to endorse sexual love between same-sex individuals. His treatment of sexuality was noted by at least one contemporary hostile review:[4]

To relieve the lack of a genuine ring in the narration of events, occasioned by the ponderosity of an overweening self-esteem and the neurasthenia of lachrymose appeals, the author introduces for the benefit of disordered sexual appetites an abundant series of tickling sensations … he grows eloquent to the degree of a revivalist at a prayer-meeting, as though he were in the business to make converts, as soon as he approaches the subject of sexual perversity.

(Thaumazo 1912)

Why, then, does Berkman's discussion of sexuality go largely unmarked in his re-circulations in anarchist and scholarship-of-anarchism contexts from the 1960s to now, even in those spaces created specifically for the discussion of anarchism and sexuality? His autobiography itself is certainly not forgotten. Why have second and third wave anarchism remembered Emma Goldman's personal/political praxis in the field of sexuality but not Alexander Berkman's? Political machismo and homophobia may be responsible in some quarters, but I think that remains only part of the answer.

For me, this failure to productively remember what Alexander Berkman had to say about sexuality hinges around questions of identity and indeterminacy. *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* depicts a nebulous nexus of interpersonal connection, one that dismantles demarcation. On the 'outside', so far as we know, Berkman's romantic and sexual companions were women, yet he writes about passionate attachments to two young men and indeed commits to print his daydream of kissing one of them. He tells his readers that these feelings were not actualised in a desiring or a physical sense, yet through them he came to an empathetic place regarding homosexuality. In other words, Berkman writes from a place of fluidity – from the sexual/emotional borderland.

Scholars of the last forty years concerned with the history of sexuality have produced much insightful work on how the social comprehension and expression of sexual behaviour are culturally and historically situated, from pioneering texts such as Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (1982) onwards. Alexander Berkman, writing in the early twentieth century, certainly bridges an epochal shift in the conception of sexuality and identity. The personal intimacies he describes, which changed his political perspective on homosexuality, were neither 'gay' nor 'not-gay', neither physically sexual nor platonic. They do not fit the categories by which we in the twenty-first century are generally given to understand passion, sexual desire and intimacy. They take place just as, according the widely disseminated hypotheses of Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks and others, 'the homosexual' as a type of person was being moulded and manifested in a variety of cultural discourses, principally medical and juridical, gradually replacing earlier conceptions of 'sodomy' as a moveable sin pertaining, potentially, to any body (Foucault 1978 [1976]; Weeks 1989 [1981]).

Whilst the general framing of Berkman today by scholars and activists remains silent on the subject of his writing on sexuality, there is one recent notable exception: Terrence Kissack's book *Free Comrades: Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States 1895–1917* (2008) contains a chapter specifically on Berkman's autobiography. Kissack recognises the significance of the book, referring to it as 'one of the most important political texts dealing with homosexuality to have been written by an American before the 1950s' (Kissack 2008:102). Unlike Jonathan Katz, Kissack makes explicit the connection between Berkman's defence of homosexuality and his anarchism, appreciating the way in which Berkman's evolution into a champion of socially taboo desire was born from the crucible of his political incarceration. Kissack is right to suggest that Berkman 'presents love between inmates as a form of

resistance to the spirit crushing environment of prison' (ibid.: 102), because Berkman never stopped resisting throughout his fourteen-year sentence, and his attachments to Davis and Schroger, his 'inside' experiences of love, were key sources of nourishment which helped him survive.

In discussing the intimacy which *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* describes with young Johnny Davis, Kissack confesses that 'Berkman's relationship with Davis is difficult to evaluate as it falls somewhere along the spectrum of friendship and erotic relations'. That 'difficulty' is not Berkman's however, but ours, a symptom of the evaluative category constraints to which anarchists, as subjects-in-time, are also subject. The 'difficulty' Kissack speaks of is, in my view, the reason Berkman's autobiographical and political writing on sexuality has been passed over by most other anarchist scholars and activists. It is because Berkman's same-sex relationships are 'difficult' to categorise that enquirers have not 'seen' them, or known how to name, recognise or give value to them.

Kissack's book situates Berkman where he indeed belongs, within the crucible of twentieth-century anarchism's developing commitments to sexual liberation, because Berkman spoke up for Oscar Wilde and men like him, deliberatively, politically, at a time when to do so was profoundly socially transgressive. But, nevertheless, to recuperate Berkman into a radical history of homosexuality, on its century-long march, or into a history of anarchist sexual politics, is insufficient. How might we productively engage with Berkman in the field of the sexual today, not only as historians, but as activists?

One might choose to read the personal same-sex prison intimacies Berkman describes as 'queer', in the sense that Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick used the term back in 1994:

one of the things that 'queer' can refer to [is]: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically.

(Sedgwick 1994:8)

Yet queer in the West in the first two decades of the twenty-first century has effectively come to signify, in mainstream culture at least, gay, white and middle class (as in the television makeover programme 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy'), as Cathy J. Cohen and others have argued (Cohen 1997). Whilst, in a sub-cultural sense, one could argue that queer now denotes the performance of radical sexual acts, as part of a radical sexual identity, marked by certain dress codes etc., Joe Rollins and H. N. Hirsch, for example, conclude, following their survey of sexual identities in the contemporary USA, that 'queer, once a theoretical marker of anti-identity [is] becoming an identity category of its own, one that marks further sexual marginalisation and liberationist political possibilities' (Rollins and Hirsch 2003:309). The *ideal* of an opposition to all stable sexual identities that can be categorised, part of the original queer political project, is often very different from the practice of an emotionally desired anarcho-queer tribalism, where sexual performance is strongly emphasised.

My observations on current (early twenty-first-century) etymological and practical circulations of queer should not be taken to mean my necessary abandonment of queer as a political project. Central to that project, according to Judith Butler, the philosopher who has become most synonymous with it, is, or rather, should be, a continual collective self-reflection, in order to make good the *praxis* of an anti-identitarian identity politics:

the critique of the queer subject is crucial to the continuing *democratization* of queer politics. As much as identity terms must be used, as much as 'outness' is to be affirmed, these same notions must become subject to a critique of the exclusionary operations of their own production ... the genealogical critique of the queer subject will be central to queer politics.

(Butler 1993:227)

It is in this spirit, of radicalising approaches to sexuality within culture as an always-becoming project, that I make my remarks. We might indeed read Berkman productively as 'queer' in its broadest sense. Yet none of the anarcho-queer websites I have come across mentions, memorialises or utilises Berkman's writing on sexuality. Amongst contemporary anarcho-scholarly and activist writings on sexuality, Alexander Berkman is not claimed politically (of course anachronistically) as anarcho-queer, although he writes as an anarchist about same-sex desire, including his own. Oscar Wilde is sometimes so claimed, Edward Carpenter likewise, but not Berkman (see, for example, the Wikipedia entry on 'Socialism and LGBT Rights'). The reason for this silence, I suggest, is that what constitutes anarcho-queer and/or is seen as being of political/sexual interest has become, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first

centuries, focussed on *sex acts* as constitutive of identity.

In concert with Peter Lamborne Wilson (otherwise known as Hakim Bey), who calls for 'an explosive reaffirmation of the polymorphic eros' (Bey 1991 [1985]: 63), contemporary anarchist activist writings on sexuality frequently emphasise sexual *performance* as liberatory. 'Don't get mad, get even, lube it up and burn the straight world down!' sloganise the creatively named anarcho-queer 'Anti-capitalist Ass Pirates' of Montreal on their website. Whilst Andy 'Sunfrog' Smith, writing in the anarcho-primitivist paper *Fifth Estate*, produced out of Detroit, argues for a 'principled promiscuity' encompassing 'erotic affinity groups, orgies or safer sex play parties, one-night stands, flings, affairs, and festive flirtations' (Smith 2000/1). He also, incidentally, quotes Emma Goldman's essay 'Marriage and Love' in the service of his twenty-first-century take on 'free love'.

Critiques of the commodification of gay culture notwithstanding, anarcho-queer concern with celebrating the pan-sexual orgiastic does risk sharing an unintentional complicity with the hyper-sexualised spectacle of the market. Western late capitalism enjoins us to be sexual, to be pneumatic high-performance 'fuckers' continuously enacting the work of a sexualised imperative to consume and to market ourselves as sexual commodities. We know this. Our commodity-based economy sells us anti-wrinkle cream, books on multiple orgasms, Viagra, speed-dating, pole-dancing-as-female-empowerment, cosmetic surgery (for both sexes), Belle du Jour and ubiquitous porn. The commodification of the sexual has been commented upon many times since the Situationists and Second Wave Feminism. Anarcho-queer elevations of polymorphous and polyamorous sexual activity to the status of a necessary continuous performance of the revolution risk becoming an extension of what Virginia Blum calls 'consumer-object relations' (Blum 2002).

A text produced by a working group coming out of Queeruption Berlin, 'Queer Is Hip, Queer Is Cool – Dogma in the Queer Scene', invites comment on some of the issues surrounding this hyper-sexualisation of anarcho-queer cultures:

Queeruption and other queer spaces are characterised by an excessive sexual atmosphere and close bodily contact. People who don't fit in are either excluded or, worse, forced to participate against their will. It seems that the subject of physical boundaries is discussed only superficially. People have been pestered, or subjected to physical contact against their will. There has been sexual harassment, people have been groped, in order to find out what they have in the way of genitals, and other similar assaults have occurred.

(Queeruption Berlin 2003)

In light of these questions, I propose that we rethink our readings of Alexander Berkman's *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* for the twenty-first century. This consciously political piece of writing on sexuality and intimacy from the anarchist 'first wave' has been neglected as such by subsequent waves of activism because of its indeterminacy. There are no autobiographical sex acts. There is no definable queer identity, if we judge queer by its contemporaneous, internally hegemonic tendency towards sexual performance. Let us now, therefore, reconsider the political significance of indeterminacy. Can this historical anarchist text assist a contemporary anarchist politics to respond to the challenge not to simply, albeit with alternative window dressing, reproduce the hyper-sexualisation of the market?

Consensual sexual practices which challenge ruling categories and structures of control, sex-positive anarcho-queer performances like the work of Ron Athey and anarcho-sexual spaces such as Club Wotever can, I believe, have continuing radical potential. But so, perhaps even more urgently at this juncture in the West, does the re-remembrance and revaluation of intimacies without definitive sexual aims or definitions – passionate friendships, affectionate touch between those who are neither family nor lovers, acts divorced from erotic conclusions. These traces in history are *not* simply embryonic forms of queer sex before gay liberation (although to strategically read them as such has had political value). They are part of the complexity and the potential of networked human interactions. Not grounded in fucking but in feeling, such intimacies cross the boundary between straight and queer.

Some earlier feminist scholars of same-sex desire emphasised the significance of emotional intimacy in a spectrum of same-sex relations across history. Lillian Faderman's book *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1980) remains one of the most famous texts in this vein, not to mention the poet Adrienne Rich's concept of the *lesbian continuum* which she envisaged as 'includ[ing] a range – through each woman's life and throughout history – of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman … [but also] … the sharing of a rich inner life … the giving and

receiving of practical and political support … etc.' (Rich 1980). These approaches were subjected to critique during the decade of the so-called 'Feminist (Lesbian) Sex Wars' that took place in Britain and the United States during the 1980s. Rich and others were called to account both for their trans-historicism and their (stereotyped) association of female sexuality with cuddles rather than the clitoris (see Ferguson 1981, for example). It is well known that the heated political and theoretical disagreements between 'anti-porn' feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon and 'pro-sex' feminists such as Carole Vance and Pat(rick) Califia led to Gayle Rubin's foundational call, in her essay *Thinking Sex*, for 'a radical theory of sex' (Rubin 1993 [1984]: 9) divorced from feminism – for 'an autonomous theory and politics specifictosexuality' (ibid.: 34). That essay contributed to the momentum in the academy that led to the development of queer theory. In the 1990s, in Britain and the United States, queer theory and queer politics achieved a high profile, upholding a rainbow coalition of 'non-normative' sex practices and identifications, grounded initially, and importantly, in anti-essentialism and AIDS activism. Queer raised the profile of sex-positivity in an era of backlash fuelled by virulent HIV-related homophobia. It recognised and promoted solidarity with transgendered and bisexual communities, creating the banner 'LGBT', under which most non-straight sexual minority-related public organisations now function, from student union groups to the Metropolitan Police.

However, the decades of the sex wars and of AIDS as 'gay plague' are now behind us. This, in the West, is a decade of increasing 'integration' in which same-sex sex is becoming almost as publicly commodified as straight sex, from gay weddings to lesbian sex toys. We need to ask how useful, in this new century, contemporary anarcho-queer strategies are, as significant revolutionary cultural forces (outside, that is, their own sub-cultural frames of reference) for thinking about liberation and intimacy. Critiques of monogamy, assimilation and a pink pound-fuelled gay-oriented consumer culture are certainly pertinent. But 'radical sex' and temporary autonomous zones are not, I think, sufficient answers. Without doubt someone like the now deceased BDSM activist and cystic fibrosis sufferer Bob Flannigan was, in performing his ethical, bodily erotic practices as living 'teach-in' art, a revolutionary. And such 'life's work' at the margins of culture, as Jonathan Dollimore and others have so convincingly argued, does significantly affect the centre (Dollimore 1991). But, as the centre moves, to stay challenging so too must the margins.

Secular Western subjects are increasingly sold a narrative that they are 'free' to have sex how, when, where and with whom they choose. But as sex and sexual attractiveness are profoundly commodified, and therefore profitable, so it takes personalised commercial 'work' to perform them. They become the only conduit through which, as adults, we are permitted to experience non-familial passionate intimacy (with the boundaried exception of the arena of sport). This injunction to express passion only through sex leads, arguably, to an impoverished range of affect. Conservatism may lament the profligate promiscuity of our era, but it is above all, as Jean Baudrillard taught us, a promiscuity of the image. Most ten-year-olds in Britain today receive initiation into sexuality by learning what sex is via online porn and Bluetooth – pneumatic, fantastic, plastic, (male) orgasm-oriented commercial sex as signifying of intimate relations for the next generation. A critique of such a state of affairs should not be left to 'family values' traditionalists. If pornography is not an evil to be suppressed (supposing even that this were practicable), neither is it a cultural terrain to be abandoned to *laissez faire* capitalism. It continues to encode powerful messages about gender, the body, sexuality, sexual relations and intimacy. Our present level of saturation means that sexual liberation, as a surfeit of 'sex-positive' sexual signs and practices, quite simply is no longer a radical message.

In tandem with what Brian McNair has called the 'pornocratisation' of culture (McNair 1996), whereby the sexual increasingly permeates the entire media sphere, from late evening 'sexed-up' versions of popular television soaps to mobile phone downloads, an accompanying new social conservatism in the public sphere is, one could argue, likewise attempting to process all non-kin intimacies through the field of the sexual. Lesbian and gay assimilationist agendas, understandably seeking acceptance, have joined these forces in promoting sexually pair-bonded monogamy as *the* form of intimate expression that should receive powerful social sanction over and above all others. And so, monogamous partnership (gay or straight) as the expected culmination-for-living, together with an anatomical smorgasbord of always on-tap

variegated sexual imagery, constitutes a powerful contemporary erotogenic regulation of intimacy. This has resulted in a society where sex is everywhere and nowhere. One must be extravagantly, openly, endlessly and skilfully sexual, and yet ultimately seek to preserve and perform this within a closed duality. Late capitalism enjoins the perpetual commodity-spectacle of sex. The public sphere purports to sanction this erotic treadmill if it occurs (by adulthood) decorously in economically interdependent units of two. Such units, as Engels taught us long ago, are designed to reproduce the labour force, and, one might add, to minimise the time necessary for 'personal life', both of which serve the interests of capital (Engels 2010 [1884]). Each trajectory, towards a pneumatic sex consumer machine, but one ultimately coupled, produces an erotic landscape wherein all non-kin love, all touch which falls outside these permitted expressive arenas, becomes subjected to intense scrutiny, constraint and speculation – both internally within each subject and externally. Witness the longstanding media speculation around Oprah Winfrey's intimate friendship with Gayle King, a connection that seems to both threaten and fascinate, as it appears impossible to categorise within permitted terms of reference. The two of them have spoken of their connection as love, but have said they are not in a sexual relationship. 'BFFs' ('best friends forever') are not supposed to want to choose to live with one another over and above their menfolk, unless they are 'actually' lesbians, and so the column inches continue in their quest to 'nail' Oprah and Gayle.

In such a climate, the celebration of polyamorous polymorphously perverse fucking, although not strategically defunct, cannot stand alone as radical critique. In many ways it mirrors, and is implicated in, the contemporary festival of sexual consumption and display that places sexual activity at the centre of personhood today and frequently shames those who are not sexually active (for whatever reason) into silence as *less self-actualised*. Montreal's *Les Panthères Roses* write, in 'The Pink Panthers Agenda' (2002), that their mission is 'bolstering the radical movement by adding a more visible and less inhibited queer element. We've got to be just as multi-sexual as we are multilingual'. Liz Highleyman, San Francisco anarcha-feminist, says something similar in her essay 'Radical Queers or Queer Radicals' (2002): 'Radical queers have succeeded in harnessing erotic/sexual energy to enliven their activism in a unique way.' As a solidarity-building mechanism for political activist queers, such spaces and sentiments can be powerful. But are we failing to notice that anarcho-queer identity, foundationally grounded in sexual activity, is, in some ways, a mirror of a mainstream in which sexual performance and consumption become the 'truth' of identity?

Ask yourself, is it easier for most ordinary Britons in their thirties to pick up a stranger in a bar, gay or straight, or to hold a friend's hand (any gender combination) and walk down the street? Which one breaks the boundary taboo? Friend handholding, without that gesture of intimacy signifying a sexual 'move' (or a perceived threat of one by sexual partners) or, to onlookers, a sexual identity or a sexual relationship, seems constrained and evokes internal discomfort, at least in British and North American culture (the situation is quite different in other parts of the world). Of course, the need to take gender and sexuality into account in any analysis remains; same-sex adult handholding carries the added anxiety of attracting potential homophobia. But, in queer and anarcho-queer sub-cultural spaces, have handholding taboos really been unmade? Who is holding hands with whom may be more varied, but the spectre of the sex imperative (who is, and who ought to be, 'doing it' with whom) haunts, as Queeruption Berlin's communiqué identified, the gestural liberation of intimacy.

I propose that it is now time to return, within Western queer, anarcho-queer and anarchist political and scholarly contexts, to considerations of intimacy. I am not advocating anything like a simplistic 'return to the lesbian continuum'. Rather, I am concerned with all (consensual) non-blood-kin passionate intimacies between people, historically and contemporaneously, which do not fit into categories defined by sex acts. Is flirting not a form of experience and communication in its own right? Why should emotionally significant deep attachments where those concerned choose not share bodily fluids be deemed less socially significant than fluid-bonded states? Certainly there is a need for historicity in this re-examination of intimacy. The grey zone between friendship, passion, sex and sexual love can and does metamorphose across time, space and *habitus*. Neither is such a call to 'consider intimacy' intended to (re-) invisibilise sex, particularly sex which has a history of denial and taboo. There are still laws against homosexuality, carrying in many cases penalties of imprisonment or death, on the

statute books of over seventy countries worldwide. The recent sentencing of Malawians Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga to fourteen years in prison for taking part in a commitment ceremony attests to that.[5] And even in nation-states where this is not the case, explicit representations of same-sex sex are undoubtedly still contested. Witness the fact that the groundbreaking UK/US drama *Queer as Folk* (1999–2005) has not been purchased or permitted screen time in a number of European countries for 'moral' reasons, for example in Poland and Greece, where the show was pulled from the Star Channel after the screening of season one of the US version invited significant protest. Moreover, let us not forget that the expression of autonomous female sexuality as a part of public culture and discourse remains, in many parts of the world, unthinkable.

This important global picture notwithstanding, in our Western marketised hyper-sexualised culture, in which, according to Zygmunt Bauman, a transitory 'liquid love' assumes a consumer sensibility (Bauman 2003), the re-reading of uncategorisable intimacy can, I suggest, reinspire us to practise a liberation of human relations which does not confine all closeness to concupiscence. Sleeping beside someone which does not assume sex, running your fingers over the arm of a person you have just met without having to categorise that erotic gesture as 'only foreplay' with an expectation of 'progression', sitting with your arms around someone non-familial which does not mean seduction; acts of tenderness, gestures that cross and recross, belonging simply neither to friendship nor to orgasmic desire, at once possible between intimates and between strangers. How many of us wish for these intimacies and fear to have them, because they breach current cultural codes that mark all such interactions with the seal of the performatively erotic? In this world of the everyday everywhere sexual spectacle, are we not in danger of being constrained by the imperative to *be* sexual, as surely as pre-1960s' generations were by the imperative to be sexually continent?

Struggles for sexual liberation are by no means over, neither in the West nor in the Majority World, on many fronts. But because the market now so aggressively sells to us in the West sexual liberation as individualised non-stop self-gratification, perhaps we need to refocus on the terrain of the intimate – to re-create space for the indeterminate, for forms of passionate and affectionate connection that do not necessarily translate into sexualities or sex acts. History can help us do that; by reading the past in context, with its many different sex/friendship/intimacy codes, its otherness of borders and boundaries, we may be inspired to challenge the sex/capital machine which in our own time seeks to turn a profit by sexualising all physicality, all passion. This does not, and should not, signal a retreat from struggles for sex-positivity, rather a recognition that streaming sex acts on broadband and MTV by no means necessarily equates with sex-positivity. Quantity is not quality. Many LGBT activists and narrators have conceptualised the borderland between intimacy and desire as a terrain to be liberated, the frontier between the closet and a state of 'out-ness', between physical longing and its actualisation.[6] However, to see the borderland *only* in such terms impoverishes our understandings of intimacy.

It is true that one can find recent spaces where the boundaries of non-sexual intimacy have been extended without sex-negativity; 1990s 'rave culture' was one such space, briefly revolutionary, where strangers and friends would massage one another's shoulders or heads whilst 'rushing' and hugging ecstatically, lost in touch and connection. But it was an escapist space fuelled by drugs (specifically MDMA), and there was no accompanying articulated *politics* of intimacy. We should be speaking about reinventing intimacy in the world out there, not simply in the anarchist ghetto, because intimacy *connects* people to one another, it forges networks, and in a sea of image-sex we are an increasingly lonely culture. A lonely society is a more controllable society. Networks of people are better than units of people at resisting and creating.

So, to return to the anarchist who was the subject of our first pages, Alexander Berkman was not interested in speaking only to anarchists. Indeed, for him, as for Goldman, the very idea of anarchism not being a revolutionary force with something to say to ordinary people was anathema. Challenging sexualised commodity culture in ways that neither simply end up mirroring it nor return to the puritanical (encompassing the particular control of women and LGBTQI people) is a broad and urgent social issue. Sexual bullying in schools has increased dramatically in the past twenty years, and so have fundamentalist forms of religion (and there

is a lot to say on the need for a renewed gender politics here). We are a culture caught between sex–violence–spectacle, for example the murder of prostitutes in *Grand Theft Auto* for points in the game, and the resurgence of religious narratives of continence – witness Stephanie Meyer's wildly popular *Twilight* series, with its 'erotics of abstinence'[7] before monogamous marriage. We need another way.

Let us now re-remember Alexander Berkman, as an anarchist who had something important to say about intimacy and sexuality. Let us remobilise Berkman's contribution. He was an anarchist who championed same-sex intimacy through the experience of his own passion. Yet he did not accord sex a significance over and above other physical and emotional expressions as the *only* 'truth' of passion. He made a political commitment whilst inhabiting the borderland. In resisting the current totalising commodification of sex, and its perpetual, impossibly perfectible, cash-cow copulating machinery, let us, in re-remembering what Alexander Berkman had to say about desire, rediscover the borderland.

Notes

1 Berkman and Goldman's relationship, first as youthful lovers experimenting with 'free love', then as lifelong friends and political soulmates, is a fascinating one, well documented in Goldman's autobiography.
2 To adapt somewhat the Kate Sharpley Anarchist Library's(1999)'The Fight for History: A Manifesto', which says that 'historical memory is a theatre of the class struggle'.
3 See http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&videoid=5485027 (accessed 30 June 2010).
4 In fact in a pamphlet, Thaumazo, a critic of left politics, wrote a short treatise devoted to excoriating Berkman's autobiography.
5 The pair have now been pardoned thanks to an international outcry, but are not able to live a life together without fear of lynching. Interestingly, the website www.questioningtransphobia.wordpress.com reports that Tiwonge identifies as 'a woman inside' but notes that the pair have been discussed almost exclusively within a Western framing as a 'gay couple'.
6 For example the 'coming out' film, which depicts young intense same-sex friendship as a step on the journey towards an adult out gay identity, e.g. Marco Kreuzpainter's *Summer Storm* (2004) and Hettie MacDonald's *Beautiful Thing* (1996).
7 See Grossman Lev, 'Stephanie Meyer: A New J. K. Rowling', *Time Magazine*, 24 April 2008.

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Chapter 3

Nobody knows what an insurgent body can do

Questions for affective resistance

Stevphen Shukaitis

> From a multitude of revolts, miniscule or general, intrinsic to all that exists, through a passionate struggle, an inexpiable affective combat in which one risks death, libertarian action attempts first of all to select and liberate new forces within situations and beings and in the interstices of the existing order. It attempts to create a common and emancipatory plane of existence, able to traverse the totality of present worlds and realities, and to recompose the totality of that which exists.
>
> (Colson 2001:241)

Baruch Spinoza once said that no one knew what a body could do, what it was capable of, when not determined by the mind. In saying this he was rejecting the idea that the body and mind, reason and emotion, are separate. For Spinoza, far from their being separate, it was only by understanding the nature of bodies and motions, bodies and their emotions, that one could understand the potential created when they interacted. Unfortunately, this unified approach to understanding emotions and creative potential was lost and forgotten for much of the past several hundred years, to be rediscovered in the most recent forty years by thinkers such as Antonio Negri, Gilles Deleuze, Genevieve Lloyd, Etienne Balibar, Daniel Colson, as well as many others. What can anarchist politics and theorizing learn from these developments. What is it that an insurgent body can do?

To foreground questions of our individual and collective capacities to affect and be affected by the world around us means that questions and concerns about personal relations and caring for each other are not insignificant concerns that can be brushed aside to tackle whatever is the pressing demand of the day. As famously observed by Gustav Landauer, 'the State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently' (Landauer 1973:226). Politics is not external to the relationships and interactions we have – it grows out of, is intensified by, and ties them together. Affect, developed through interaction and care, exists as expansive and creative powers: 'it is a power of freedom, ontological opening, and omnilateral diffusion … [that] constructs value from below' and transforms according to the rhythm of what is common (Negri 1999:86).

Surely the path to creating a better, joyous, freer, more loving world is not one that is premised upon a constant struggle that leaves one tired and run down. The question is one of creating communities of resistance that provide support and strength, a density of relations and affections, through all aspects of our lives, so that we can carry on and support each other in our work rather than having to withdraw from that which we love to do in order to sustain the capacity to do those very things. This is to create a sustainable culture of resistance, a flowering of what I am calling affective resistance – that is, a sustainable basis for ongoing and continuing political organizing, a plateau of vibrating intensities, premised upon refusing to separate questions of the effectiveness of any tactic, idea or campaign, from its affectiveness. The simple gestures, even sometimes ones that seem insignificant, are often the ones that mean the most in creating affective community. Not that they are glorious tasks by any means – asking how someone is doing, taking an extra five minutes to work out what's bothering someone or why they're preoccupied – but because of this it is easy to overlook how important they really are. They form the basis underlying our ongoing interactions, lodged within the workings of our affective memory. Immersed within the constant and ever-renewing nourishment contained within the gift economies of language, motions and affections, all too often we fail to appreciate the ongoing work of social reproduction and maintaining community that these acts entail.

Creating a vibrant political culture, one that exists 'beyond duty and joy', to borrow the phrasing of the Curious George Brigade (2003:33–40), is not an easy task. Indeed, as our very joys, subjectivities, experiences and desires are brought further and further into the heart of the production process, creating autonomous spaces based upon their realization becomes all

the more tricky. Fortunately some people have begun to explore and find ways to cope with and overcome the traumatic stress and tensions that can build up as a part of organizing. But what about the less spectacular or obvious forms, the damage of the everyday? What happens as all the constantly mounting and renewing demands on our very being, our capacity to exist and continue to participate in radical politics, build up? We find ourselves in ever more cramped positions, unsure of how to work from the conditions we find ourselves in. Do we carry on as we can, slowly burning out and finally withdrawing from ongoing struggles, perhaps consigning them to some part of our former youth that had to be left behind to deal with other things? Might there not be other options and paths to take?

Affective resistance starts from the realization that one can ultimately never separate questions of the *effectiveness* of political organizing from concerns about its *affectiveness*. They are inherently and inevitably intertwined. The social relations we create every day prefigure the world to come, not just in a metaphorical sense, but also quite literally: they truly are the emergence of that other world embodied in the constant motion and interaction of bodies – the becoming-tomorrow of the already-here and now. And thus the collective practices of relating, of composing communities and collectives, exists where 'the interplay of the care of the self … blends into pre-existing relations, giving them a new coloration and greater warmth. The care of the self – or the attention that one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves – appears then as an intensification of social relations' (Foucault 1984:53). And so it is from considering the varying affective compositions and dynamics that affective resistance begins. It is the unfolding map that locates what Precarias a la Deriva have described as affective virtuosity, where

what escapes the code situates us in that which is not yet said, opens the terrain of the thinkable and livable, it is that which creates relationships. We have to necessarily take into account this affective component in order to unravel the politically radical character of care, because we know – this time without a doubt – that the affective is the effective.

(Precarias a la Deriva 2006:40)

Autonomous feminism and affective revolt

Strike or unemployment, a woman's work is never done.

(Dalla Costa and James 1972:30)

To find inspiration and some kernels of wisdom for teasing out a basis to expand the concept of affective resistance, perhaps one could turn to the experiences and knowledges in the history of autonomous feminism,[1] from the writings of figures such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Silvia Federici to campaigns like Wages for Housework and the more recent organizing of groups like Precarias a la Deriva. Their efforts come from experiences where the very basis of their being, the capacity of their bodies to care and relate are directly involved in necessary functions for the reproduction and continued existence of capitalism; involved in necessary social reproduction, but in ways that for a long time have been unacknowledged by large segments of the so-called progressive and revolutionary political milieu. From this necessary but unacknowledged position one can learn from their insights into organizing to find routes and passages toward more affective forms of resistance.

Despite the importance that autonomist feminism has played in the development of autonomous politics and struggles it is commonly relegated to little more than a glorious footnote of figures emerging out of autonomist thought (Katsiaficas 2001). Strangely enough, because housework, caring labour and many other forms of social labour were not directly waged, it was often assumed that they simply took place outside the workings of capitalism, as if they existed in some sort of pre-capitalist status that had mysteriously managed to persist into the present. Organizing around gender, affective labour and issues of reproduction posed numerous important questions to forms of class struggle that focused exclusively on the figure of the waged industrial worker (Hardt 1999). The revolts of housewives, students, the unwaged and farm workers led to a rethinking of notions of labour, the boundaries of the workplace and effective strategies for class struggles: they enacted a critical transformation in the social imaginary of labour organizing and struggle. Because the labour of social reproduction and unwaged work was not considered work, was not considered to produce surplus value or to be of relevance for capitalism, it was often ignored and overlooked as an arena of social struggle. Relegated to an adjunct status compared to what was held as a/the real focus of power, economic power and class struggle, it was assumed that these sorts of

concerns would be worked out after capitalism had been overthrown. But, as argued by Alisa Del Re (1996), there is a great importance in learning from and taking seriously the concerns put forth by autonomous feminism, precisely because attempting to refuse and reduce forms of imposed labour and exploitation without addressing the realms of social reproduction and housework amounts to building a notion of utopia upon the continued exploitation of female work.

Autonomous feminism, by exhorting that this simply was not going to stand any more – that it was ridiculous to be expected to constantly care for and attend to the tasks of social reproduction, from childcare to caring for parents to housework, all the while being told that what one was engaged in was *not work at all*[2] – shattered the ossified and rigid structures of the narrowly and dogmatically class-oriented radical imagination. As observed by Elisabetta Rasy, feminism is not external to politics, neither is it necessarily part of class struggle in an already determined manner; rather it is a movement within these various groupings, a movement creating conditions for the emergence of other subjects and experience to finally be acknowledged and learned from:

feminism opens up a magnetic crack in the categoric universe of the male-Marxist vision of the world, painfully exhibiting a history of ghosts behind the slippery façade of facts and certainties. The absolute materiality of the ghosts who embody need and desire stand in contrast and opposition to the phobic philologies of the existent and the existed.

(Rasy 1991 [1978]: 78)

Organizing around issues such as legalizing and creating access to abortion, divorce, contraception, sexuality, violence against women, while not reducible or contained within the framework of class struggle, embodies a challenge to forms of class-based social domination as it exists through the ability to control and restrict possibilities for social reproduction.

This shattering of the previously hermetically sealed dead-end of the radical imagination opened up a long-needed avenue for contesting and confronting forms of domination in all aspects of capitalist society (Shukaitis 2009). As argued by Leopoldina Fortunati, while it may have appeared that the processes of production and reproduction operated as separate spheres governed by different laws and principles, almost as if their relation was a 'mirror image, a back-to-front photograph of production', their difference was not a question about whether value was produced, but rather one of how the production of value in social reproduction '*is* the creation of value but *appears otherwise*' (Fortunati 1995 [1981]: 8). This is directly contrary to claims that housework and forms of domestic labour produced use values and thus were not involved in the production of value for capitalism.[3] In other words, by only focusing only certain forms of social labour and the exploitation involved in them (which was considered the basis for an antagonistic political subjectivity capable of overthrowing capitalism), this analysis overlooked myriad forms of social power and exploitation that operated within fields of social production and reproduction that, because of their unwaged status, did not appear as such. And perhaps even more importantly, this blindness, a situation created by the obfuscation of the theoretical baggage, also blinded radicals to the possibilities for political action emanating from these positions. But, as long as housewives, or the unwaged, or the peasants, or other populations were excluded from the narrowly defined Marxist framework of analysis and politics, 'the class struggle at every moment and any point is impeded, frustrated, and unable to find full scope for its action' (Dalla Costa and James 1972:35).

Wages for/against housework

We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create what will be our sexuality which we have never known.

(Federici 1980:258)

Slavery to an assembly line is not a liberation from slavery to a kitchen sink.

(Dalla Costa and James 1972:35)

There has long existed a relation between the nature of social reproduction and women's forms of political self-organization.[4] But this relation is not specifically between women and the form of political organization as much as it is the influence of the resources and possibilities available for supporting social reproduction. Rather, because of their location within specific articulations of social roles and relations, it is more often women that are affected with a greater intensity by various forms of political domination and power that attack the basis of

social reproduction. Just as the destruction of the commons was accompanied by the enclosure of the female body (Federici 2004) (which largely came to replace the role formerly played by the commons through countless hours of unacknowledged labour), neoliberal assaults from the 1970s until the present have targeted collective ownership as well as the meagre gains congealed in the form of welfare state programmes and the gains won by feminism.

Given the often-harsher effects that capitalism and the whole array of forms of social domination have on women, it really should not be of any great surprise that they would play important roles in struggling against these forms of domination. From the mothers' demand for 'bread and herring' that started the Russian revolution (Sorokin 1950), to the role of women in struggling against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank imposed structural adjustment programmes and austerity measures that accompany the disciplinary devices of international loan slavery, the importance of and roles played by women all too often get ignored or passed over because they do not fit into the form of what is generally recognized as political action. This makes the reluctance of much of the Left, from Marxist theoreticians to union organizers, to see the relevance of feminist organizing as a class issue all the more exasperating. It's one thing to be exploited constantly and seemingly throughout all moments of the day and spaces of one's life, but then it's another, even worse, condition to find that one's allies and comrades don't consider one's struggle against these conditions to be part of a common endeavour. In other words, women found themselves trapped in conditions not only with a 'double shift' of work in both the formal waged sense and in tasks of social reproduction, but also during what Ursula Huws has referred to as their 'third shift'. This is the third shift of labour that is necessary for the social reproduction of political organizing, whether union organizing or otherwise. Many such movements were replete with people who did not understand these multiple layers of labour or their difficulties, and treated organizing around them as 'reactionary' and 'divisive' (Huws 2003:112). Or, as quipped by Silvia Federici, 'We are seen as nagging bitches, not workers in struggle' (Federici 1980:255). Given that, feminist separatism is clearly a totally sensible response to 'comrades' that are often little more than condescending and patronizing allies.

Autonomous feminism is thus not just important in itself, but also in that it works as an important reopening of a sedimented imaginary of struggle. It is a cracking apart of an imaginary blinded by its own categories and presuppositions. By demanding that housework and caring work be recognized *as work*, that labour takes place not just in the physically bounded workplace but also exists all throughout the tasks of social reproduction and community life, autonomous feminism opened, and continues to open, a space for a reconsideration of many of the concepts and tactical baggage that had been held on to. 'Once we see the community as a productive centre and thus a centre of subversion, *the whole perspective for generalized struggle and revolutionary organization is re-opened*' (Dalla Costa and James 1972:17). In other words, the personal is political, but it is also economic, as well as social and cultural. Struggles around issues of care and housework, of the tasks of the everyday, are not just individual concerns unrelated to broader political and economic questions – they are the quotidian manifestations of these larger processes. Recognition of their connections, as well as the connections against questionable power dynamics in the home, school, office, hospital and all spaces of social life, is an important step in socializing and connecting minor moments of rupture and rebellion into connected networks of struggle (Shukaitis 2008). As Dalla Costa and James argue, there is great importance in understanding the relation of domestic labour and its exploitation to struggles diffused throughout society precisely because '[e]very place of struggle outside the home, precisely because *every sphere of capitalist organization presupposes the home*, offers a chance for attack by women' (Dalla Costa and James 1972:38). Organizing around domestic labour acted as a key point in the development of autonomous struggles because of its locations within intersecting dynamics of gender, race and class (Van Raaphorst 1988);[5] learning from these struggles is all the more important precisely because of the multiple constraints and difficulties women faced, and ways that they found to contest multiple forms of social power and domination.

One of the ways these demands would become embodied was in the various Wages for Housework campaigns. Originating initially in Italy and the UK, these campaigns, based on

demanding recognition of the countless hours of unpaid work involved in typically female labour, quickly spread to many locations across the globe. Originating from struggles of women of the classical working class (such as demands around equal pay in the workplace), student groups, the New Left and various feminist organizations, the campaign used many of the concepts and framing of Marxist categories while at the same time attempting to move past the limitations of and assumptions about the 'true' revolutionary subject that often accompanied them. Admittedly the campaign and demand for remuneration for housework were controversial and received much criticism from both the right and the left.[6] In particular, it was argued that the campaign could have the effect of further consigning and limiting women to a domestic sphere, this time in a way that had been argued for through a feminist lens. Anna Ciaperoni makes this argument:

It is insidious to try to re-establish – even through filters from feminist experience – a theoretical value for the age long confinement of women to domestic activities, though unconstrained, because how many women actually choose housework? In this way one risks erasing ten years of feminist struggle and practice, for the destruction of the ideological basis of female subordination.

(Ciaperoni 1991 [1982]: 270)

Alternatively it was argued that the demand for wages represented a further commodification of yet another aspect of life and was harmful in that way. But what is most inspiring here, and most useful for rebuilding movements of affective resistance, is how these women found ways to formulate new demands from the ambivalent positions in which they found themselves. Working from within these constraints they formulated new modalities for political antagonism, finding ways to socialize and connect struggles based around the ways their capacities and very existence were exploited. This could be understood as Wages for Housework's function as a pole of class recomposition and route for the increasing of collective political capacity of struggle. In the words of Mariarosa Dalla Costa:

The question is, therefore, to develop forms of struggle which do not leave the housewife peacefully at home, at most ready to take part in occasional demonstrations through the streets … *The starting point is not how to do housework more efficiently, but how to find a place as protagonist in the struggle: that is, not a higher productivity of domestic labour but a higher subversiveness in the struggle*.

(Dalla Costa and James 1972:36)

The various Wages for Housework attempted to do just that: to find positions of higher subversiveness in struggle from which it was possible to organize against the isolation and misery that accompanied the miserable conditions of capitalist patriarchy.

In that sense the ultimate goal of such campaigns could be seen not as the demand of wages themselves, but rather as using the demand for wages to ferment and spread antagonisms against the structural systems of patriarchy and capitalist control that have long instituted and relied upon the unwaged and unacknowledged burden of women's labour. This was the source of much of the antipathy towards the campaigns, based on confusing the demand of wages for housework as object (from which it could be seen to keep women in the home, the commodification of caring labour, etc.) rather than as a perspective and catalyst of struggle and change. This confusion, argues Silvia Federici, separates a moment and temporary goal of the struggle from the dynamics of composition and the formation of collective capacities, and thus overlooks 'its significance in demystifying and subverting the role to which women have been confined in capitalist society' (Federici 1980:253). The demand for wages for housework is not then an embracing of and struggle for waged status, but it is a moment in finding effective methods to struggle against the imposition of work and the dynamics of class power that exist under capitalism. That is, Wages for Housework is precisely the construction of a composition of social forces that makes it possible to struggle against the forms of housework, social roles and dynamics of exploitation that underpin them: 'To say that we want money for housework is the first step towards refusing to do it, because the demand for a wage makes work visible, which is the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against it' (Federici 1980:253). In other words, Wages for Housework is a moment in the struggle of wages *against* housework: a strategy of composing class power from the position that women have found themselves in, but precisely to escape from that position. In the words of Roberta Hunter-Hendersen,

The essential task was to re-appropriate our own energy, intellectual, social and emotional, and it meant working together with patience as we unfolded our constricted limbs, began to stretch our oppressed kinds, and learnt again to interact with each other.

(Hunter-Hendersen 1973:41)

We've drifted a long way (or have you?)

The oppression of women, after all, did not begin with capitalism. What began with capitalism was the more intense exploitation of women as women and the possibility at last of their liberation.

(Dalla Costa and James 1972:23)

Despite the amazing feminist upsurge that entered public visibility and consciousness during the 1960s and 1970s, many of the issues that inspired it continue to exist, even if there have been vast improvements in addressing some of them. Disparities in wages, gender discrimination, differences in power and violence against women continue to be major issues for almost the entire world to a greater or lesser degree. The neoliberal onslaught of the 1980s and ongoing dismantling of the welfare state in much of the industrialized west have also created difficult questions for many women. And, perhaps most depressing in some ways, large sections of the left, and even the 'radical left', continue to largely ignore issues around gendered labour and forms of organizing around them.

It is from this realization that Precarias a la Deriva, a feminist research and organizing collective which in many ways is one of the most notable inheritors of this strand of feminist politics, began. Precarias a la Deriva formed in Spain in 2002, starting out of a feminist social centre, La Eskalera Karakola, initially as a response to a call for a general strike. The problem is that a strike did not address the forms of labour that many of the women were involved in, namely forms of care work, invisibilized jobs and precarious work. For those involved in these forms of work, participation in the strike would be unlikely to have any positive effect on their circumstances and could very easily end with them losing their jobs altogether. In fact, a majority of people who were increasingly involved in such forms of work, which have come to be discussed under the concept of precarity, were not even that affected by the proposed changes in labour legislation that inspired the call for a strike because their social position was already so unstable.

The members of Precarias a la Deriva thus set out to find methods to investigate and understand the changing nature of work and social relations and to develop methods of generating conflict that would suit this changing terrain. The method they initially chose to work with was that of the dérive, which is drawn from the Situationists, who employed forms of wandering through the city while allowing themselves to be attracted to and repulsed by its features and thus hopefully to open up new spaces and experiences that would otherwise and usually be ignored or overlooked (Debord 1958). Precarias a la Deriva modified the concept of the dérive, which they argue in many ways was particularly marked by the social position of the bourgeois male subject who had nothing better to do. Instead they sought to update the dérive to drift through the circuits and spaces of feminized labour that constituted their everyday lives.[7] The drift was thus converted into a mobile interview, a wandering picket that sought out women who were involved in the many forms of precarious and caring labour, to find out how the conditions affected them, and how they might work from them. They decided to investigate five overall sectors and interconnected spaces: (1) domestic; (2) telemarketing; (3) manipulators of codes (translators, language teachers); (4) food service (bars, restaurants); (5) health care. Using this method, the mobile interview/picket was used

to take the quotidian as a dimension of the political and as a source of resistances, privileging experience as an epistemological category. Experience, in this sense, is not a preanalytic category but a central notion in understanding the warp of daily events, and, what is more, the ways in which we give meaning to our localized and incarnated quotidian.

(Precarias a la Deriva 2003b)

Precarias used this practice of drifting as a means to explore the 'intimate and paradoxical nature of feminized work', to wander through the different connections between the spaces of feminized labour, and to find ways to turn mobility and uncertainty into strategic points of intervention:

to appropriate the communicative channels in order to talk about other things (and not just anything), modify semiotic production in strategic moments, make care and the invisible networks of mutual support into a lever for subverting dependence, practice 'the job well done' as something illicit and contrary to productivity.

(Precarias a la Deriva 2003b)

They aim to use these forms of intervention to construct what they describe as points of aggregation which, borrowing from the Buenos Aires militant research group Colectivo Situaciones (with whom they have corresponded a great deal), will be constructed based not a notion of aggregation capacity (the construction of mass forms of organization) but rather on

consistency capacity, or the ability to form intense and dense networks of relations (Colectivo Situaciones 2005).

The practice of the *dérive*, the drift, as wandering interview and as a form of militant research, was thus an important starting point (and continues to be an important practice) for Precarias because it operates, in their words, as a form of 'contagion and reflection' whose potentiality is not easily exhausted; it is '[a]n infinite method, given the intrinsic singularity of each route and its capacity to open and defamiliarize places' (Precarias a la Deriva 2003a). The shifting and transformation of everyday social relations and realities does not cease during the first phase of engaged research and intervention into a social space. Hence the need to continue to ask questions about how those spaces, and those living within them, are formed. As methods for visible political intervention transform the composition of a particular space, the relations within it also change. While militant research is often employed briefly to get a sense of the situation in which intervention will take place, after the initial inquiry the projects cease, and organizers continue to rely on their knowledge of the composition of social relations and realities without taking into account how they have changed. Precarias, by utilizing the openness and fluidity of the drift, of its capacity to defamiliarize one in an environment, emphasized the need to keep the inquiry open. The aim is to keep circulating and exchanging knowledges, often through the forms of workshops, gatherings, *encuentros* and publications, which are then fed back into other projects.

For Precarias in many ways find themselves, though they have drifted quite far to discover new methods of intervention, having to confront many of the same questions that faced feminist organizers in the 1970s, particularly those involved in campaigns such as Wages for Housework. While Precarias argue that 'care is not a domestic question but rather a public matter and generator of conflict', they are also quite aware of the difficulty in this task, for, as they observe, there is 'the question of how to generate conflict in environments which are invisible, fragile, private' (Precarias a la Deriva 2003a). This division between the political and the personal, the public and the private, has long been one of the dividing lines that feminists have confronted as a barrier to the raising of their concerns and demands without having them merely dismissed as *their* concerns and demands. One can see this dynamic, for instance, in the ways in which concerns about retreat from public life, the spectre of bowling alone, overlook the invisible networks of civic engagement embodied through forms of care which are at the same time forms of political involvement (Herd and Meyer 2002). This is the process whereby discussions around gender become understood as 'women's issues', rather than the construction of gender and social roles more broadly. Or the ways in which domestic labour and care, even in discussion of them within radical political circles, can become assigned and narrated as a feminist issue alone, rather than seeing the ways in which these forms of labour and interaction relate to and are enmeshed within the larger frameworks of power being contested. Critically involved in primary socialization, they are, perhaps, the primary tasks in keeping together a society.

Precarias' answer to this encompasses multiple parts of their overall project and centres to a large degree around questions of affect. Rather than treating issues of domestic labour, the role of empathy and the creation of relations, interaction, sexuality and forms of care as separate issues and concerns, they describe them as the communicative continuum sex–attention–care. This continuum connects the diverse sectors and areas of their investigations, along which they point out that sex, care and attention are not pre-existing objects but socially narrated and constructed ones. They are by no means naturally formed in a specified arrangement (although they are often *naturalized* as if this were the case), but rather are 'historically determined social stratifications of affect, traditionally assigned to women' (Precarias a la Deriva 2006). It is along this continuum that Precarias see the role of affect as being key, existing at the centre of the chain that

connects places, circuits, families, populations, etc. These chains are producing phenomena and strategies as diverse as virtually arranged marriages, sex tourism, marriage as a means of passing along rights, the ethnification of sex and of care, the formation of multiple and transnational households.

(Precarias a la Deriva 2003a)

This perspective of looking at the interconnections between forms of activity that have often been constructed as feminine is extremely important, especially in a period where the forms of activity described as such have become much more enmeshed and widespread across the

functioning of the economy, from the 'service with a smile' or 'phone smile' of the McDonald's employee and telephone operator to the hypervisibility of the (female) body in media and advertising as a way to excite libidinal desires for the glories of consumption. And it has been argued that those involved in caring labour, who constitute an estimated 20 per cent of the workforce, tend to be more highly class conscious regardless of the gender of those involved (although notably there are higher percentages of women employed in such positions) (Jones 2001). Thus the question of affective resistance, attention to the dynamic of affective labour, becomes all the more pressing because those involved in such work contain a potentiality for rebuilding an inclusive revolutionary class politics at a moment when it may appear to have vanished from the realm of existing possibilities.

Arguably, the increasing rise of forms of human resource management, particularly those stressing the appreciation of diversity and cultural difference, as well as attention to issues of gender, are also part of the growing presence and importance of skills of communication and interaction extended through the social fabric as directly productive activities and abilities. But this 'becoming woman of labour' (Negri 2004; Corsani 2007; Osterweil 2007), which as an ambivalent process has highlighted the potentiality found within forms of affective labour and relations, has also continued to be marked by forms of social division and domination in which gender relations are historically embedded: 'a tremendously irregular topography, reinforcing, reproducing and modifying the social hierarchies already existent within the patriarchy and the racial order inherited from colonialism … [upon which] the global restructuring of cities and the performances and rhetorics of gender are imprinted' (Precarias a la Deriva 2003b).

Precarias a la Deriva thus propose a typology for considering forms of feminized and precarious labour, based not upon overall transformations in social and economic structure (although such is clearly related), but rather on the nature of the work and the possibilities it opens up or forecloses for insurgencies against it. Typologies based on specific forms of economic transformations in labour markets (for instance distinguishing between chainworkers and brainworkers) lack coherence, they argue, and tend to overlook the many ways in which similar dynamics overlap and affect multiple positions (as well as tending to homogenize various positions and particularities). Developing this typology based on unrest and rebellion, they propose three general types of labour:

1. jobs with a repetitive content (telemarketing, cleaning, textile production) which have little subjective value or investment for those involved – tendency for conflicts based upon refusal of the work, absenteeism, sabotage

2. vocational/professional work (anything from nursing to informatics, social work, research, etc.) where there is a higher subjective component and investment – conflict tends to be expressed as critique of the organization of labour, how it is articulated, and the forms it takes

3. jobs where the content is directly invisibilized and/or stigmatized (cleaning work, domestic labour, forms of sex work) – conflict tends to manifest itself as a demand for dignity and recognition of the social value of the work.

(Precarias a la Deriva 2005a)

The question for Precarias, as already observed, is finding points for commonality and alliances, lines of aggregation where intense forms of relations and communities can emerge and are strengthened. Precarias have also been involved the creation of various social centres and feminist spaces where such can occur and have been involved in the EuroMayDay Networks and parades, which have acted as key points of visibility for those contesting existing conditions.

Thus the central problem, and one that has become much more pressing in recent years, is around the issue of security. The military and neoliberal logic of security,[8] involving anything from increased border controls and migration regulation to the proliferation of private security firms and non-governmental, has risen during the past twenty to thirty years, during the same period that the decline of the welfare state and apparatuses of social security and welfare measures have been taken apart. This overall shift in the macropolitical situation is articulated in what Precarias describe as a 'micropolitics of fear' that is directly related to the regulation of the labour market (and the configuration of state–labour–business) and to increasing forms of instability and precarization of life that extend over the whole of society as regimes of discipline. The increasing importance, or perhaps overwhelming nature, of the logic of security

is such that Precarias have argued that it is 'the principal form of taking charge of bodies and organizing them around fear, contention, control, and management of unease' (Precarias a la Deriva 2005b). At the same time as regimes of security, visibility and exploitation come together in a particular kind of state form, parts of the state devoted social welfare are dismantled. Precarias see this as a moment where it is necessary to put forth a logic of care as the counterpoint to the logic of security which has become the hegemonic dispositif of politics in many locations, because, as they argue, '[c]are, with its ecological logic, opposes the securitary logic reigning in the precaritzed world' (Precarias a la Deriva 2006:39).

This involves four key elements: affective virtuosity, interdependence, transversality and everydayness (Precarias a la Deriva 2006). These four elements are used to address questions of the sustainability of life, of the ability to continue in the everyday tasks of life, labour and communication in which we are constantly immersed. Thus it becomes possible to create cracks in these forms of articulation (Sharp 2005), and by doing so to focus on the role that forms of care, affects and relations have in the continual process of social reproduction. Or, as Precarias describe it, to develop 'a critique of the current organization of sex, attention, and care and a practice that, starting from those as elements inside a continuum, recombines them in order to produce new more liberatory and cooperative forms of affect' (Precarias a la Deriva 2006:41).

Precarias have pursued this through two related proposals, arguing for what they have described as 'biosyndicalism' and the proposal of a 'caring strike'. Biosyndicalism, which as the name itself implies, is a drawing together of life and syndicalist traditions of labour struggle while stripping them of their more narrowly economistic elements. This is not to propose that life has 'become productive' or that it has 'been put to work', as starting from a feminist analysis of affects, caring labour and social reproduction makes it quite clear that affects have always been productive, productive of life itself, even that forms of life existed for many years that were not enmeshed in capitalist relations because they did not yet exist. Rather than claiming that life has now become productive, the argument here is that there are changing compositions of capitalism, modulated as eruptions of social resistance are reintegrated into its workings. In these transformed arrangements affective labour is more directly exploited, occupying a more central position. Similarly, it is not that conditions of instability and a precarious existence are a new phenomenon (as they have been perhaps more the rule than the exception for the vast majority of the history of capitalism); rather this process of precarization comes to currently encompass a much broader swath of the population than it has in recent times. Biosyndicalism for Precarias does not mean that labour struggles are no longer important. Rather it indicates that as processes affecting the composition of labour are not restricted to a clearly definable sphere of 'work', conflicts over them likewise cannot be easily marked in one area or sphere. Thus it becomes all the more important to learn from these struggles and their successes (as well as their failures) in order to 'invent forms of alliance, of organization, and everyday struggle in the passage between labour and non-labour, which is the passage that we inhabit' (Precarias a la Deriva 2005a).

Thus they propose what they call a 'caring strike', a strike carried out at the same time by all those involved in forms of work all along the sex–care–attention continuum, from those involved in domestic labour to those involved in sex work, from telecommunications workers to teachers, and so forth. While this in many ways is close to the idea of the general strike so cherished (and fetishized) within the syndicalist tradition, the difference is that this is a combined strike by those involved in related forms of labour involving the dynamics of care. It is these dynamics, that are increasingly productive and important to the workings of the economy, that are the most often invisibilized, stigmatized, and underappreciated. While campaigns like Wages for Housework were built upon bringing visibility to forms of struggle and care within the home, Precarias are for expanding this notion to include the same dynamics and processes involved in the home that are spread across the economy, and bringing visibility to them, to organize around them, and to consciously withdraw their productivity, that which holds together the whole arrangement. In their words,

because the strike is always interruption and visibilization and care is the continuous and invisible line whose interruption would be devastating … the caring strike would be nothing other than the interruption of the order that is ineluctably produced in the moment in which we place the truth of care in the centre and politicize it.

(Precarias a la Deriva 2006:42)

It is not that Precarias magically solve all the most pressing questions of revolutionary politics for today. Indeed, there are difficulties contained in what they propose; what about forms of caring labour that are difficult (and perhaps sometimes even impossible) to refuse? For instance for those involved in critically intense forms of health care, of caring for relatives and children, and so forth? The rhetorical weight and power of such a proposition might very well lie in the reality that it is nearly impossible for those engaged in these forms of 'affectively necessary labour' (and perhaps more varying forms of socialized labour) to go on strike at all (Spivak 1985). Precarias' proposal of the caring strike and their concept of biosyndicalism do not solve these difficulties *per se*, but rather productively reopen these questions in much the same way that campaigns like Wages for Housework opened the question of feminist organizing and class. In this manner Precarias bring the focus back to aspects of gendered labour and feminist organizing in ways that should not be forgotten. With the proposal of the caring strike, Precarias take part in an ongoing process of bringing visibility to underappreciated aspects of social reproduction (including for this discussion the social reproduction involved in maintaining the lives of communities of resistance) and by doing so raise the question of what it would mean to withdraw them. While there is great potential for social rupture and upheaval to be '*dérived*' from the sometimes manic movement of the radical imagination, it is likewise important to never forget the conditions and processes that underlie the possibility of its emergence and continuation.

A thousand affective plateau: anticapitalism and schizophrenia

I think Utopia is possible, I see Utopia in humanity. We can reconsider our existence as completely utopian. Bringing a baby to life or simply the act of walking or dancing are examples of utopist action. Utopia should be in our streets.

(Anita Liberti, quoted in Kendra and Lauren 2003:23)

The problem that confronts us today, and which the nearest future is to solve, is how to be one's self and yet in oneness with others, to deeply feel with all human beings and still retain one's characteristic qualities.

(Goldman 1998:158)

It's 3 a.m. … and several months after I initially began writing this. And I must admit that in some ways things don't seem a whole lot clearer than when I began. There are still too many things to do (the pile in a different order than several months ago is about the same height) and I'm still tired. Have things ended up right back where they started, with the circle unbroken, by and by, but with no pie in the sky when I die? Joe Hill already told me that was a lie. And perhaps that is the point after all: that any sort of politics which promises all the glories of heaven/revolution to come some day after one spent all one's time and effort in devotion/organizing is deeply troubled. And perhaps most troubled in the sense that without attention to the ongoing forms of care, interaction and relations that constitute a community, especially a community in resistance, it is very unlikely to hold together for very long.

It is in this space that a focus on care, on affective relations, reveals its true importance: when framed as the question of affective resistance. For, as Precarias argue, care acts as the 'passage to the other and to the many, as a point between the personal and the collective' (Precarias a la Deriva 2005a). Affective resistance, the creation of new forms of community and collectivity, involves the creation of subjectivities, which in turn are produced in the formation of these emerging communities. So it is never possible to clearly differentiate between the formation of subjective positions and the formation of collective relations, as they emerge at the same time and through the same process. But by focusing on this process of co-articulation and emergence, not as a means to stated political goals, but as political goals in themselves which are related to a whole host of other emerging communities, concerns and articulations, the care of self in relation to the community in resistance is clearly understood as necessary and important.

This is, perhaps not very surprisingly, quite close to arguments that are made and have been made within strains of radical political thought for some time, from arguments about the importance of pre-figurative politics (the refusal to separate the means of organizing from their ends leading to creating forms of organization which prefigure the kind of social arrangements to which struggles are organized) and the more recent emphasis on creating open spaces, networks and forums (Nunes 2005). The difference here is that one cannot overlook the very real forms of labour, effort and intensity that are required for the ongoing self-constitution of communities of resistance. To do so all too often is to reproduce patterns of behaviour that

communities in resistance are working to undermine. Sexism, racism, homophobia, heteronormativity, classism reappear as people fall back on structures of thought and assumptions that have become normalized through their daily lives, or are assumed to have been dealt with.

Affective resistance does not proceed by making a giant leap through which all existing dynamics that one could wish to do away with are magically dispersed forever more. Indeed, if it were possible to radically change all the structures of thought, mental schemas and shortcuts and forms of socialization that construct our lifeworlds at once, it would be very difficult to do so without getting dangerously near insanity. Schizophrenia even. Rather, it is, to borrow a phrase from Italian feminist theorist Luisa Muraro, about creating 'relations of entrustment', an attention to the composition of relations as a necessary basis for revolutionary politics (Muraro 1991). It is to understand the composition of relations and affections as an important pole for a process of political recomposition, one that underlies and is necessary for such a compositional process. To prevent the radical imagination from ever settling into a notion that politics occurs 'over there' or at certain moments, rather than as something that grows out of the very relations and ethical interactions that constitute the fabric of everyday social life.

There are cracks in the structure of the everyday, uprisings, where it is possible to create new forms of relations and sociabilities: moments of excess. But it is also very difficult to maintain them for any length of time (Free Association 2006). Perhaps it might make more sense to wander towards creating a thousand plateaux of affective intensities, vibrating locations where forms of energy, community and intensity can be sustained and build links among other plateaux as they emerge. Thus affective resistance is not something that needs to be built from scratch, or something that only concerns relations within movements themselves. Rather it is a focus on intensifying and deepening both the relations and connections that exist within movements, as well as finding ways to politicize connections and relations throughout everyday life. Gestures of kindness and care, random acts of beautiful anticapitalism, exist and support life in many more places than just where black flags are flown and revolutionary statements issued. Rather then considering interpersonal and ethical concerns as an adjunct and supplement to radical politics, affective resistance is about working from these intensities of care and connection.

Notes

1 The category I'm employing here, autonomous feminism, is admittedly a bit clunky. While in this particular piece I'm drawing mainly from currents of thought coming out of autonomous Marxism (unorthodox Italian radical politics coming out of the 1960s and 1970s), this category is not meant to be a delimiting one. It is definitely not intended to be a historically or geographically closed category. Autonomous feminism can thus be understood as any feminist current focusing on the autonomous capacities of people to create self-determining forms of community without forms of hierarchy of political mediation and direction.

2 One should also note that the recognition of forms of gendered labour as work doesn't necessarily mean that struggles around them start from a better position. As Angela Davis notes, black women were paid wages for housework for many years in the USA before the advent of the Wages for Housework campaign, but that didn't mean they were in a better position in their struggles around such work. This should make clear that the potentiality for political recomposition found within a strategy such as Wages for Housework is always dependent on the particular social situations it is deployed within. See Davis (1981: ch. 13).

3 Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James emphasized the point this way: 'We have to make clear that, within the wage, domestic work produces not merely use values, but is essential to the production of surplus value' (Dalla Costa and James 1972:33). It was on this point, the domestic labour produced value, surplus value in the Marxist sense, that provoked a great deal of controversy, particularly from those who held to their sense of Marxist categories regarding the dividing lines between productive and unproductive labour. It was often argued that women produced use values, not surplus value for capitalist production, and therefore were in a position more akin to feudalism or pre-capitalist relations. Alternatively, it was argued by people like Carla Consemi that, regardless of whether women were producing surplus value or not, the complex and multilayered nature of circuits of production and social reproduction makes this very difficult to directly perceive: '[Housework] does not produce "goods," it will not be transferred into money – unless it is in a very indirect, in calculable way (which is still to be examined)' (Consemi 1991 [1982]: 268). In some ways the question of whether domestic labour does or does not *really* produce surplus value might seem a bit silly from the outside of it. But to appreciate the significance of this it is important to remember that in the debate carried on in the terrain of Marxist thought to argue that such forms of labour did not produce value was an important part of marginalizing and arguing against their importance. Thus one can see how making the argument that domestic labour does produce surplus value expands the spaces where labour struggle occurs precisely because it is organizing around the production of value necessary for the functioning of capitalism. As argued by James and Dalla Costa, 'The possibility of social struggle arises out of the *socially productive character* of women's work in the home' (Dalla Costa and James 1972:37). It might be

possible to argue that domestic labour either does not produce value or does so in a way that is indirect, subtle and ephemeral, while still affirming the importance of feminist struggles around domestic labour. This was not an argument commonly made, and would be somewhat strange, and difficult to continue to make, within a Marxist framework centred on issues of exploitation in value production.

4 See on this Balser (1987) and Brenner and Laslett (1991), as well as the work of Aiwa Ong, who argues that the widening gap between current analytical constructs and workers' actual experiences comes from a limited theoretical grasp of both capitalist operations and workers' response to them (Ong 1991; 1987).

5 Two examples of organizing around domestic issues are the Household Technicians of America, which functioned perhaps more like a guild than a union, and the National Committee on Household Employment, which was formed in 1964 by the joint efforts of the National Urban League and National Council of Negro Women. Particular articulations of power relations through gender and class are obviously enmeshed within dynamics of slavery, colonialism and imperial conquest, and how their effects continue to live on and shape social relations. In the USA, for example, organizing around domestic labour was very important for African American women still living within a social context shaped by the lingering effects of slavery, particularly in their struggle to clearly define their roles as independent employees (rather than servants of household masters). For more about this relation of race and the organizing of domestic labour, see Rio (2005), Kousha (1994) and Palmer (1984).

6 For information on some of these controversies, as well as useful background information and history, see Malos (1980). It is also worth noting that there is some divergence and disagreement about whether the analysis put forth by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, which would be the inspiration for the wages for housework approach, supports this strategy. The main text of *The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community* seems to imply that this demand would not be a suitable basis for organizing, while the footnotes appended afterwards in subsequent editions printed by the Wages for Housework Campaign, not surprisingly, claim that it is. There also seem to be some contested questions about which parts were jointly written and which were not. For more information on this apparent lack of sisterhood in struggle, see Laura Sullivan (2005). For a more recent overview and reinterpretation of these issues from multiple theoretical perspectives, see Caffentizis (1999).

7 Arguably there could be seen to be some tension in this kind of updating. Notably, if the purpose of the *dérive* were to open up unforeseen possibilities and connections through the drift's openness, stipulating an already understood framework and space for drifting then could foreclose possibilities for connection that might exist outside that framework. Alternately one could argue that the Situationist notion of the *dérive* already had an understood framework and space of its operation (provided by the subjective positioning of those involved and the understood spaces of the city) that was not quite as open as they would have liked to believe. The alternations of Precarias have thus not limited the possibilities *per se*, but have thus made more explicit about their framework and positioning compared to that which was assumed in the SI version.

8 Precarias a la Deriva's translators have often used the phrase 'securitary logic' to indicate the difference between more onerous forms of security (military, border, etc.) and security as a more positive value (sense of personal safety, freedom from assault). While such seems a useful distinction to make, I find 'securitary logic' quite awkward and thus have avoided using it. This should be taken to be a dismissal of attempts to found a politics based upon other notions of security, such as the True Security action during the protests against the Republican National Convention in 2004 (which tried to put forward a notion of security appropriate to the building of self-determining communities as opposed to a military logic of security). See also Wendy Brown (1995).

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Poetic interlude 2

RED, OR THE THINGS I LEFT UNSAID

Helen Moore
Red is becoming, I said.

No, they said, *red is not at all becoming—*

that colour of dissembling, it lies

in the bed

of our daughter's undoing …
Oh, yes (I'd liked to have said,

sparing my blushes),

red has been all my undoing,

and my becoming—
free to throw off the dishonesty

of clothes, to stampede through

damp, crimsoned leaves,

fall flat on my face laughing.
You've made your bed and you can

lie in it, they said. And so with sheets

to hoist a harlot, walls daubed

with rich Moroccan clay,
pleasure shipped me through the ebb

and flow of pain to the waters of the Lethe,

where I washed away their fear—
that deep red of my undoing,

that becoming one

with the coursing energies of love,

the pulse of early dawn,

the stars, the damask of plants,
being wholly woman—

not their little girl.

CUNT MAGIC

Helen Moore
This gap in the hedge

is neither absence nor lack
but a green Moon – the frame

around the young Wheat beyond,
a heavenly gateway

that beckons us to quit the path,
its stiles and bridleways,

the blue willow-patterns of our thought,
and pass through this cunicle,

this cunning – finger its tender flowers,
its pitted stems, feel frissons

of what we once knew as holy.
Thereafter trust that the bird *not*

in the hand is worth a cunctipotence
in the bush, and reawaken the desire

for Life's wild fecundity.

Chapter 4

Post(-)anarchism and the *contrasexual* practices of *cyborgs* in *dildotopia*

Or 'The War on the Phallus'[1]

Lena Eckert

Utopia has been a subversive form: that is perhaps the first point to make in 'mapping' utopia. The very uncertainty over the intention of the author – is this satire? is it wish-fulfilment? is it a call to action?

<div align="right">—Krishnan Kumar, Utopianism (p. 87)</div>

The criticism which has been aired towards utopia is apparently well founded since one meaning of the word is 'no place'–so how can it exist? Yet, utopianism can also be viewed as 'perpetually exploring new ways to perfect an imperfect reality' (Niman 1997:302) or as a 'condition of permanent revolution, a continuing rebellion against our own tendencies toward entrenchment and domination' (Amster 2001:31). In that sense, anarchism has a lot in common with utopianism. As much as utopia is always comprised of both 'critical' and 'constructive' aspects (Kumar 1991:97), the anarchist formation of denial or rejection always carries with it constructive potentialities, although it often positions itself as negating the *status quo*. Utopia is critique in itself because it proves that envisioning something different is possible. The possibility of envisioning something holds the prospect of it becoming a viable project. To put it simply: we can't do what we can't think, so why not think what we could do?

Krishan Kumar states that the value of utopia is not in its relation to present practice; its value is rather in its relation to a 'possible future' (ibid.: 3). He argues that utopia's '"practical" use is to overstep the immediate reality to depict a condition whose clear desirability draws us on, like a magnet' (ibid.). In this essay, I want to introduce the reader to a book which has drawn me on like a magnet. Beatriz Preciado's *contrasexual manifesto* has attracted me since I held it in my hands for the first time. From time to time I go to my bookshelf and pull it out, browse and remain on a page for a while. I am convinced that Preciado's *dildotopia* (or godotopia),[2] which forms a large part of the *contrasexual manifesto*, is a form of utopia because 'utopia challenges by supplying alternatives, certainly. It shows what could be. But its most persistent function, the real source of its subversiveness, is as a critical commentary on the arrangements of society' (ibid.: 87–8). Preciado wants her *manifesto* to be read as a tool to interrogate knowledge and desire; a means to partially, constantly temporally question the 'givens' of society and its very preconditions; it is a critical commentary on the arrangements of a phallocentric and heteronormative society. Kumar notes that some utopians were convinced that 'utopias … may be realized "in principle or in spirit" rather than in detail or *in toto*' (ibid.: 71). 'Utopia,' as Kumar notes, 'confronts reality not with a measured assessment of the possibilities of change but with the demand for change' (ibid.: 107). This is why for me the *manifesto* is related to utopianism: the demand for change. This demand, of course, also relates to anarchism. In the following essay, I map out how I see these relationships and how they can be put in larger theoretical contexts. I therefore will first look into the relevance of taking up sexuality as an anarchist project to then connect poststructuralist theories to post(-)anarchist thinking. As I see power as the central issue in both projects, I will briefly touch upon it, yet I will use the genealogical looking-glass of sexuality in order to explain the connection I see between Preciado's *manifesto*, its ally, the post-human cyborg, and post(-) anarchist thinking.

Jamie Heckert, anarchist queer theorist, argues for the inclusion of sexual politics in anarchist politics because in his understanding there can be no theorisation of an anarchist non-hierarchical society or practical anarchist strategies without the consideration of sexuality (Heckert 2004). Heckert hereby refers to the poststructuralist deconstruction of binaries and argues accordingly that sexuality has to be regarded as socially constructed. He stresses that 'any attempt to build a society where people are comfortable with themselves and each other *must* include a radical reorganization of sexuality' (ibid.: 101). Heckert also promotes the famous feminist claim that the personal is political and states that 'sexuality is not separate from these other issues which are more commonly considered political' (ibid.). Therefore, he reasons that 'we should understand anarchism as a theory and practice that promotes the

development of non-hierarchical social organization' also with regard to sexuality (ibid.: 103). Following on from Heckert, I will argue in this essay that anarchist thinking or theorising also has to acknowledge the political character of psychoanalytic concepts of subjectivity, embodiment and desire. Moreover, these powerful concepts govern our concept of sexuality and entail the notion of the supposed ahistorical naturalness of sexuality. As I show in this essay, a queer critique can be anarchist and anarchist thinking can become queered (to the extent that they are not already intrinsically interconnected and interdependent).

Only recently, so-called post(-)anarchists started to work explicitly on and with poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and others. The notion of classical anarchism and its relationship to its own version of 'post' has already been discussed very critically (e.g. Cohn 2002; Cohn and Wilbur 2011; Franks 2007, 2011).[3] I favour the approach of Jason Adams, who wrote about the relation between poststructuralism and anarchism, reclaims poststructuralism as an intrinsically anarchist movement of thinking and argues that most poststructuralist thinkers have or had a great affinity with anarchist thought. Poststructuralism, in Adams' notion, is born out of the political movements of the 1970s and 1980s and was therefore always already part of radical movements:

'Postanarchism' has emerged recently as a term that could be used to describe the phenomenon whereby this radically anti-authoritarian poststructuralist theory has developed and mutated and split off into dozens of hybrid critical theories over the past three decades, finally coming back to inform and extend the theory and practice of one of its primary roots.

(Adams, quoted in Franks 2007:132)

By interpreting the development of a number of poststructuralist theories in the light of an anti-authoritarian (maybe post(-)anarchist) motivation it should be possible to once again hunt down the politics in poststructuralism. In the following section I want to touch briefly on the main tropes in anarchist thinking that can be read as underpinning Adams' point. Moreover, in this essay I aim to add one more of these 'hybrid critical theories' to anarchist agendas and theories by reading the *contrasexual manifesto*, which is to a great extent based on poststructuralist theories, as a possibly post(-)anarchist approach to desire and embodiment.

At the heart of the question of how poststructuralism and anarchism could form a convincing union, or of how they may already be always already interconnected, is the notion of power. It is the question of where power acts, what power actually is and where, therefore, resistance can be located. Post(-) anarchists of all stripes have brooded over this and have debated this issue heatedly. While the most renowned post(-)anarchists, Saul Newman, Lewis Call and Todd May, have been criticised for not being accurate in their definition of power and for using various notions interchangeably and inconsistently, they have also attempted to fuse postmodern or poststructuralist notions of power in a positive way with anarchist thinking and politics (e.g. Cohn 2002; Cohn and Wilbur 2011). If one defines power as domination, then it can and should be resisted, but if one defines power as being everywhere and as an integral part of any society, then it cannot be resisted – at least not straightforwardly. This constitutes a theoretical and practical dilemma for anarchism which can be made productive.

What explicitly poststructuralist post(-)anarchist approaches have accomplished is that they challenge the overemphasis on the state and capitalism and emphasise the intersections of hierarchical social relations, including gender, race and ethnicity. These power relations work therefore on different levels, which can be called levels of micro-power and macro-power.[4] I agree with Deleuze, who says that every politics is at the same time a macro-politics and micro-politics (Deleuze and Guattari 2004:213) and any distinction made has to be aware of micro-political theory that remodels traditional understandings of macro-political structures. The concept of post(-)anarchism debatably 'views capitalism and statism not as causes but as effects, not as diseases but as symptoms', and it 'challenges an entire psychology and an entire semiotic structure which underwrite the dominant system of political economy' (Call 2002:117–18). In this essay, I focus on this 'micro-political' psychological level – the level of subjectivity and the symbolic – because I see them as connected to the concept of sexuality. Since these symbolic or psychological 'powers' are diffuse and everywhere, they require a form of resistance that is equally 'everywhere'–in our very psychological and physical make-up as humans – against certain traditional understandings of our 'make-up as humans'. With Preciado's *manifesto,* I argue for resistance in the forms of non-heteronormative, psycho-political strategies of embodiment and desire.

Where does anarchism come into poststructuralism and vice versa?

It has been argued that Friedrich Nietzsche can be reclaimed as an anarchist because his writing reflects *an anarchy of thought.* Lewis Call, for example, notes that Nietzsche's 'writing attacks hierarchy not only at the political level but at the philosophical level as well, undermining the very foundations of the deeply entrenched metaphysics of domination upon which the West has come to rely' (Call 2002:2; see also Moore and Sunshine 2005).[5] In terms of the attacks on the 'deeply entrenched metaphysics of domination' the affinity with post(-)anarchist thinking seems rather obvious.

The works of Michel Foucault (1965, 1976, 1977, 1978), who has radicalised Nietzsche's thought by developing genealogy into a method with a specific political dimension, is central to many post(-)anarchist theories. Genealogy is a method to interrogate the production of knowledge in the context of multiple power vectors and can therefore contribute to the analysis of power/knowledge complexes rather than ignoring them or taking them for granted as traditional historical methods have done. In fact, Todd May states that the method of genealogy which seeks to trace the emergence of its object in relation to power structures can be considered the anarchist method *par excellence* (May 1994:90). Foucault, Call states, is interested in genealogy as a strategy for the subversion of discipline as well as psychological discourses about sexuality (Call 2002:3). Therefore, a genealogical method is promising when trying to articulate the intersections of social practices with bodies and sexualities which, in turn, are both products and practices of power. Bodies and the concept of sexuality are not ahistorical facts; the knowledge which is produced about and through them is immersed in political, social and cultural frameworks. Genealogy therefore operates in the context of certain epistemological arrangements which Foucault has called 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980:131). To interrogate the categories of gender identity or sexual identity from a genealogical perspective therefore means to consider the notion of truth in relation to its exclusionary and disciplining effects. The construction of a homosexual identity category at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, shows us more about the political anxieties concerning the distinction between the sphere of production and reproduction and heteronormativity than about actual desire and sexual practices. Or, using a different example: I only become 'white' or 'female' in a society in which there are (bio-)political relations such as 'black' and 'male' to produce my being located in these particular identity frames. Power/ knowledge creates our sense of ourselves and assigns us positions of identity in the socio-political context – and this can be done otherwise.

Post(-)anarchism, as I argue here, can be seen as a set of conscious practices and action through which one can reinvent everyday life and identities accordingly. Poststructuralist political theory replaces the orthodox anarchist approaches to politics and power as oppressive with the idea that power has a 'positivity or creativity' (May 1994:87). As Foucault puts it, 'power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power' (Foucault 1980:98). This is also the case with regard to sexual practices and 'identities'–but instead of subjecting ourselves to the heteronormative matrix (i.e. a phallogocentric conceptualisation of the unconscious and a constitutive lack) we could resist creatively and try to become otherwise!

Becoming resisting: a note on agency

Post(-)anarchist thinking 'prioritises the value and necessity of difference over identity' as Heckert (2011:200) states. Similarly, Saul Newman, in his paper 'War on the State' (2001), details how according to Max Stirner the individual needs to overthrow her_his[6] own identity in order to begin the constant process of becoming *not* oneself. Deleuze agrees and, as Newman states,

rejects the unity and essentialism of the subject, seeing it as a structure that constrains desire. He too sees *becoming* – becoming other than Man, other than human – as a force of resistance. He proposes a notion of subjectivity which privileges multiplicity, plurality and difference over unity and flux over the stability and essentialism of identity.

(Newman 2001:159)

This perspective is quite the contrary to the essentialist view of identity, which conceives of categories such as sex/gender, race, ethnicity, age, (dis)ability and so on as located on and in the body. These categories are thought of as being the crucial factors to make us what we *are*. This notion of *being* somebody relies on narratives of coherence, unity and independence: bodies are supposedly single, coherent entities which function independently from each other. Identities are rigidly composed of these hermetical and unifying discourses about the various aspects of our social relations. However, poststructuralist theories on identity and the body have formulated wide-reaching critiques of this (Cartesian) conceptualisation. Post(-)anarchist conceptualisations of society also offer resistance on the basis that this notion of *being* lacks reference to the interconnectedness of human subjects and social relations.

And it is here where I see the possible connections between queer theory, anarchist thinking and poststructuralism. Poststructuralism can show how political oppression is always linked to larger cultural processes of knowledge production and cultural representations. The central aims of poststructuralism and queer theory are to deconstruct totalising conceptualisations of identities, bodies and power. As Andrew Koch states, poststructuralism's 'liberating potential derives from the deconstruction of any concept that makes oppression appear rational' (Koch 1993:348) and can therefore be a valuable tool to queer and anarchist thinking. Because identity is one of the categories through which oppression works, anarchist thinking combined with queer critique of identity categories could work towards a different form of coalition building. A precondition is, according to Michelle Bastian, to 'foster nonessentialist attitudes toward identity and recognize identities not as natural or innate but rather as influenced throughout by systems of coercion' (Bastian 2006:1040). In a heteronormative society, one of the most influential categories is a so-called sexual identity which is presumably stable and fixed and either homo or hetero. Interestingly, these highly politically invested categories find a resonance in psychoanalytical theories.

The Law of the Father vs *dildotopia*: a symbolic struggle?

Jacques Lacan's concepts of desire, the phallus and the Law of the Father (also known as the Name of the Father) have a profound influence on our conceptualisation of identity and subjectivity (Lacan 1989).[7] While controversial (see, e.g., Robinson 2005), Lacan's psychoanalytical conceptualisation of authority and resistance has been adapted for anarchist radical politics (e.g. Newman 2004). Such a reception has been possible because Lacan provides a counter-discourse to the Cartesian notion of 'reason' as being *the* constitutive factor of the subject. Lacan launches what Call terms a 'devastating attack upon the conventional Cartesian concept of subjectivity' (Call 2002:3) by installing desire instead of the logos as the foundational working of the psyche. However, from a queer feminist perspective this conceptualisation of desire is highly problematic because it is phallogocentric, meaning that the phallus is the final (symbolic) arbiter of a possible and limited range of desires and identities.

For Lacan, the Law/Name of the Father is a symbolic formation and has a key role in the symbolic order. The Law/Name of the Father represents power and control which can never be reached by the infant. The phallus would thereby be the (master) signifier of mastery; the child has to identify with the 'father' in order to be able to participate in social/sexual relations. This 'father' is not any individual person but a signifier that only gains its relevance from a network of signifiers which include the 'law' or the phallus. This process is marked by the entrance into a linguistic system in which 'male' and 'female' can only be understood in relation to each other in a system of language and in relation to the ontological claim of a 'constitutive lack'. This ontological claim has been criticised by post(-)anarchists, namely Andrew Robinson, as a 'reintroduction of myth and essentialism into political theory' (Robinson 2005:1). Robinson even goes as far as saying that the essential claim inherent in Lacan's theory of the subject is shallow and empty since one is not supposed to really understand it but to simply 'accept' it, 'under pain of invalidation' (ibid.). With regard to political theory, Robinson argues, rightly, that any assumption of an absolute event of absence (which the Law/Name of the Father implies) leads to depoliticisation. Most troubling in Lacanian thinking is the 'idea of a founding negativity', posited as an 'ahistorical absolute' instead of an 'autonomous positive or

affirmative force' (ibid.: 7). Indispensable for the conceptualisation of the Law of the Father in Lacan's theory is the phallus – or rather its absence in some bodies. Postmodern feminism as much as postmodern anarchism has been concerned with creating strategies for the subversion of this law as an epistemological, linguistic and psychological force (Call 2002:6) because the specific theoretical strategies which they employ question any static concept of subjectivity as well as the 'simultaneous deployment of fluid, flexible postmodern subjectivities' (ibid.). The rejection of the Law of the Father as conceived by Lacan would permit the rejection of any kind of law emanating from the state, economy or any other symbolic order. This fundamental rejection of the concept of law opens up new possibilities to radically criticise the processes of subjectivation. Judith Butler has argued: 'As opposed to the founding Law of the Symbolic that fixes identity in advance, we might reconsider the history of constitutive identification without the presupposition of a fixed and founding Law' (Butler 1990:72). One might even go further and argue alongside Félix Guattari that

psychoanalysis transforms and deforms the unconscious by forcing it to pass through the grid of its system of inscription and representation. For psychoanalysis, the unconscious is always already there, genetically programmed, structured, and finalized on objectives of conformity to social norms.

(Guattari 1996:206)

Guattari seems to suggest that we can do away with psychoanalysis completely. Rather than rejecting psychoanalysis wholesale, however, I think it is possible to open up a space between psychoanalysis and an anarchist expression of agency within daily sexual life. In order to sketch out this possible reformulation of psychoanalysis and agency I draw on the concepts of *contrasexuality* and *dildotopia* by Beatriz Preciado (2003), the *post-human* by Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston (1995) and the *cyborg* by Donna Haraway (1991).

These works offer methods of resistance to heteronormative/hierarchical power structures as well as rich resources for constructing a critique of the hierarchies of body parts and gender identities. They offer useful ways of reconfiguring the relationship between post(-)anarchist theory, psychoanalysis and poststructuralist queer or feminist theory, and consequently hold a specific potential for further queer anarchist developments of theory and activism. In particular, Preciado's debatably ironic construction of *dildotopia* is helpful in identifying some difficulties in, but also raising novel possibilities for, the relation between queer theory and anarchism. To exemplify this, I will provide a narrative of the affinity between Haraway's utopian concept of the *cyborg* and its *posthuman* sexuality toward a reconceptualisation of the anarchist subject with regard to its desires, pleasures, embodiments and politics. I even suggest that my reading of these utopian concepts could stimulate anarchist alternatives. As Tadzio Mueller states, 'anarchism is a scream, not one of negation, but of affirmation: it is about going beyond rejecting, about starting to create an alternative in the present to that which triggered the scream in the first place' (Mueller 2003:123). Mueller calls the creation of an alternative 'prefigurative politics'. In the *manifesto* I see such prefigurative politics happen.

Contrasexuality

English speakers are likely to be unfamiliar with Beatriz Preciado's *contrasexual manifesto*, which has been published in Spanish (2000), French (2000) and German (translation in 2003).[8] Since its publication, the *manifesto* has been discussed widely and received with a high degree of controversy in France, Spain and Germany. I want to propose that Preciado's *manifesto* should be read in line with post(-)anarchist theories and politics to interrogate the possibilities of reclaiming the body, the psyche and especially desire from power structures which prevent anarchism as a mode of living.

Preciado's concept of *contrasexuality* seeks to interrogate the production of knowledge about gender, sex and sexuality, and should be understood as a specific way of questioning the production of knowledge, desire and their interconnections. It is also a theoretical practice, a way to think practically. Indeed, the *manifesto* is based on a genealogy of the production of gender differences as well as sexual differences which are produced by a heterosexual social contract – the heterosexual matrix. This heterosexual social contract is reaffirmed by normative performances which inscribe themselves as biological truths on to bodies (Butler 1990). Preciado, in line with this Butlerian notion, considers nature to be a social contract which could be replaced by a *contrasexual* contract (Preciado 2003:10). This *contrasexual* contract is

based on the theoretical process of *contrasexuality*, which claims that desire, sexual arousal and the orgasm are only 'retroactive products of a certain sexual technology' (ibid.: 12). This certain sexual technology produces the perception and conceptualisation of reproductive organs as sexual organs. This discursive production results in a sexualisation of a bodily totality, which Riki Wilchins and David Valentine describe by means of the fact that 'genitals accounts for only 1 percent of the body's surface area' but these genitals still 'carry an enormous amount of cultural weight in the meaning that are attached to them' and constitute much of what individuals and society 'come to understand and assume about the body's sex and gender' (Valentine and Wilchins 1997:215). This could be translated as: in an organism all organs are equal, but some are more equal than others because they determine the meaning of the whole body; it is a *pars pro toto* logic which constitutes gender through sexuality (i.e. penis/ vagina equals man/woman). Sexual organs are used to represent the body-totality of men and women and therefore the binary sex/gender system.[9] Therefore, a body always becomes sexualised – it is assigned to either male or female from the beginning of its existence only because our frameworks of perception limit us to the dichotomous interpretation of bodies.[10] Yet, we can become differently!

Preciado's use of the concept *contrasexuality* is indirectly derived from Foucault's analysis of the possibility of resisting the disciplining production of sexuality not by struggling against the prohibition but by elaborating a contra-or counter-productivity. Preciado wants her *manifesto* to be understood in terms of a Foucauldian counter-discourse: *contrasexual* practices are 'technologies of resistance' and 'forms of a contra-discipline' (Preciado 2003:11). This counter-discourse, as I read it, is for Foucault a practical engagement in political struggles: a space in which the formerly voiceless might begin to speak (Deleuze and Foucault 1977:209). I argue that this voicelessness concerns the difference of bodies; only the presumed binary homogeneity of bodies can be heard in a heteronormative system. That is to say that we learn to understand bodies only as either male or female. There is no possibility of creating from scratch something new which exists entirely outside the discourse in which we are living. What we *can* do to resist or to produce a counter-discourse is reclaim or twist traditional notions in order to place them in new contexts. In depriving language or symbols of their referent and providing them with new contexts, hegemonic discourses lose their meaning. Preciado refers to Butler's analysis of the reclaiming of the term 'queer' as a productive self-identification. Butler's notion of reiteration (in particular concerning gender) makes possible a positive resignification and re-appropriation of identities, discourses and certain aspects of lived processes and actualities (Butler 1993:315). Preciado understands sexual identity, in line with Butler, as a repetitive act of inscription of sexual practices, and in this repetition or subversive reiteration of, for example, the derogative term 'queer' lies the possibility of undermining hegemonic forms of sexual identity. I read Preciado's work as an act of creating spaces within a discourse from which a counter-discourse can emerge. The method of *contrasexuality* impacts upon notions of sexuality by decontextualising the 'quotation' of the *dildo* and twisting the position of declaration (Preciado 2003:16). The *dildo* is one among many organic and non-organic machines such as hands, whips, penises, chastity belts, condoms and tongues (ibid.: 60). Therefore 'quoting the *dildo*' means implying the possibility of ceasing to assign the power of the phallus (the Law/Name of the Father) to an arbitrary organ. This arbitrary organ – the penis – then ceases to be the signifier of sexual/gender difference. The reiteration of the *dildo* is subversive because the *dildo* comes before the penis, as *contrasexuality* claims (ibid.: 12). This means that quoting the *dildo* displaces the origin of the penis as a male sexual organ. Sexual/gender difference, which is based on the difference of having or not having a penis, is replaced by the *dildo*. The *dildo* is a supplement which produces what it completes. The practice of 'quoting the dildo' on a head, any other body part or a tool that is involved in the *contrasexual* practice could be understood as a reference which is mediated through a metaphor but exceeds the function of a metaphor in the sense that the *dildo* becomes the body part or tool on which it is projected. This is referring to the workings of the phallus which, whenever quoted, implies the penis as the marker of sexual/gender difference. Quoting the *didlo* messes up the supposed direct relationship between the psyche and the make-up of bodies. By introducing the reader to the practice of a repetitive quotation of the *dildo*, Preciado seeks to reclaim sexuality from the heterosexual social contract. *Contrasexuality* is a practice

of de-heterosexualising. It is about showing that there can be an end to the social construction of certain social relations as natural, such as the heterocentric social contract of regarding sexuality as the natural expression of so-called male and female bodies (ibid.: 10).

Preciado, in a first reflexive approach to the *dildo*, places the *dildo* as the precursor of the penis, which retroactively produces the penis (ibid.: 61). And the *dildo*, as a Derridean supplement, replaces the penis as if it was replacing a void; the *dildo* substitutes the penis in a form the penis never has; the *dildo* aims the penis against itself (although even a penis can be the *dildo*). The second approach to the *dildo* places it in the position of 'sexual excellence' (ibid.: 64) to be able to transgress or 'transcend' sexual difference. And in the third phase of this 'discursive reflexivity' (ibid.: 64) the *dildo* is made to come back to the body but only to *contrasexualise* it. Organs and quotations move horizontally (not vertically like in the hierarchical heterosexual order – the *dildo* can be everything and not just the penis or its lack) and therefore is 'multiple effect and not a single origin' (ibid.: 64). Preciado states that the penis is not the phallus but it is commonly associated with it, which is why 'masculinity' is powerful. The invention of the *dildo* is the end of the penis as a marker of sexual difference – everything can become *dildo*! The subversive repetition of the quotation of the *dildo* on any kind of body part proves and represents its performativity. The *dildo* positions a logic which will later betray it because it is not localisable, as it is not there to distinguish bodies by its presence or its absence. The *dildo* signifies sexuality but not sexual difference. The *dildo* remains invisible in *contrasexual* practices, Preciado proposes. *Contrasexuality* relies on the *dildo* to *think* about and challenge heterosexuality; therefore it is not the *dildo* as we think of it (as being the better penis because it is always erect), but it is the resignification of the phallus, inverted and subverted by its reproduction in other body parts. Preciado seems to warn us: the *dildo* can be everything. In this claim she takes a similar line to Butler (1993) when she says the phallus can be every (lesbian) body part. However, the *dildo* is not the phallus, neither does it represent the phallus, precisely because the phallus does not exist. The phallus only emerges as a form of power and as a psychoanalytical construction which can be subverted and ultimately replaced without leaving a trace.

By means of the genealogical method, Foucault provided a foundation for the rewriting of histories of sexuality and, in line with him, Preciado claims that the body is an 'organic archive of the history of humankind' (Preciado 2003:15). But Preciado dismantles this history as one of naturalisation, where codes are constantly renegotiated, leading to cycles of omission, elimination and inclusion according to the coordinates of masculinity and femininity. The insight that these coordinates penetrate any production of knowledge allows Preciado to disrobe and dismantle sexual organs as products of hierarchically organised space (ibid.: 18). In a dichotomously organised heteronormative society the sexual organs are used to speak for the totality of the body's identity and their relationship is organised in a patriarchal space. This space is produced by technologies of gendered/sexualised relations which organise body parts and practices and judge them as private and public, institutional or domestic, social or intimate (ibid.: 18). This specific kind of discursive and material management/administration is extended onto the body, where we find body parts also organised according to hierarchically organised, binary structures: sexual and non-sexual, reproductive and non-reproductive, sensual and less sensual, intimate and public. Preciado concludes that 'the bodily architecture is political' (ibid.), which has important implications for anarchism, for which articulating and confronting the history of power and governance have always been central subjects. It is crucial that sexualities and bodies, as well as their functions and fragmentations, are included within this agenda.

Preciado explores this 'bodily architecture' through an analysis of the history of the orgasm, which she argues is embedded within the history of medical-sexual technology: she traces the technologies and discourses which are employed in the making of the intersexualised and transsexualised body. The performative 'operation theatre', which every body is subjected to in the process of being sexualised, is dismantled as inherently heterosexualising. In Preciado's argumentation, intersexualised bodies block the mechanical work of the performative 'operation theatre'; they dismantle the arbitrary character of categories and the 'heterodesign' of bodies (ibid.: 96). The de-construction and de-fragmentation which are at work in these processes recur in Preciado's analysis of the prosthesis, which will eventually take her to the

reclaiming of the technologies of sex through the *cyborg*. For an exemplification of how Preciado proceeds in her genealogy of the sexualising of bodies I draw on her history of the female orgasm (ibid.: 69–88). Preciado tells the story of the medicalised and pathologised female body, whereby the 'treatment' of hysteria sometimes included the burning and cutting of the clitoris. Various technologies applied to the genitals were engineered to prevent masturbation (e.g. chastity belts as tools for enforcing governance).[11] In other cases of adult and married women, the woman's body was perceived as an uncontrollable object whose energetic activity needed to be regulated with the help of mechanical apparatuses; this could even include being forcibly masturbated by a vibrator. Preciado states that 'female pleasure has always been problematic, since it doesn't seem to have a precise function either in biological theories or religious doctrines, according to which the objective of sexuality is the reproduction of the species' (ibid.: 92). Clearly our current conception of women's orgasms is coloured by this history, and must engage with these understandings. The notion of a woman's orgasm is deeply rooted in processes of naturalisation, medicalisation and control. It therefore seems plausible to read the history of humankind as the history of technologies, as Preciado does. The medically actualised 'female orgasm' is nothing more than the paradoxical result of the work of divergent technologies for repressing masturbation and at the same time producing the 'hysterical crisis'. It needs reclaiming! For Preciado,

sex is no precise biological spot, and no natural force either as an organ or as a practice. Indeed, sex is a technology of heterosocial government, which reduces the body to erogenous zones. For this it avails itself of an asymmetrical re-distribution of power according to gender (feminine/ masculine) so that specificaffects[12] fall together with certain organs and certain perceptions fuse with certain anatomical reactions.

(Preciado 2003:14)

Heterosexual society therefore is a social apparatus for the production of femininity and masculinity which operates by a separation and fragmentation of the body. Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis retells the story of fragmentation in a different framework and with different terms. The conceptualisation of the emergence of the bodily ego (Freud 1961 [1914]) and imaginary body parts (Lacan 1989) has fostered a focus on the genitals as the locus of gender identification and sexual pleasure. The psychoanalytical traditions which have taken these concepts for granted have reinscribed these hierarchical relations with regard to sex, gender and sexuality. Only recently, feminist and queer theorists have started to deconstruct these theories and proposed different readings (e.g. Mitchell and Rose 1982; Butler 1990; Campbell 2000). Preciado's *manifesto*, however, is the most undutiful daughter in this endeavour since she eclectically intertwines psychoanalytical and non-psychoanalytical aspects.

Thinking the *dildo*

As Preciado might have asked when she started to think the *dildo*, is there a way to subversively undermine the power of the phallus if we still remain in the framework in which it came to birth? Do we need to refer to morphology at all when we construct and interrogate desire? Do we need to refer to psychoanalysis if we want to (theoretically) change the structure of desire? As Gallop says, the psychologically informed reader cannot 'be separated from the subject that can mistake the phallus for a penis (with its "turgidity" and its fluids that participate in "generation")' (Gallop 1985:156). This inevitable reading implies the erect penis as a morphological 'locus' of desire and generation, as heterosexual reproduction, which makes it essentialist and heterosexist. Preciado adapts Butler's 'aggressive reterritorialization' described in 'The Lesbian Phallus' (1993) but bans the phallus, both as a metaphor and signifier. Preciado installs the *dildo* in a different territory; she is not concerned with the emergence and the maintenance of the bodily ego or its possible psychoanalytical heritage. Preciado, in her unorthodox rewriting and reclaiming of our psychoanalytically constructed bodily identities and pleasures, disrupts any linear and coherent narrative of these powerfully installed control and production mechanisms. She seems to ask: if the phallus is mobile and can even signify 'lesbian bodily parts', then why should it still carry the history of its origin and its name, which is patriarchal, heteronormative and essentialist. The *dildo* as being non-organic, detached from the body, but at the same time as being able to become any part of the body or the body in its entirety provides Preciado with a tool that has a non-coherent

narrative. The *dildo* can effectively undermine hegemonic structures of desire, pleasure and bodies when applied as a subversive quotation. Quoting the *dildo* on any body part (or the entirety of the body) means to question the body as a sexual context; it questions the possibility of framing or defining the context. The practice of quoting the *dildo* demarcates flexible bodily borders and subverts the heteronormative arrangements of bodies and their parts. With the *dildo*, the impossibility of arranging body parts and bodies in a hierarchical space with regard to sexuality and sexual/gender difference emerges. The *dildo* is the centre of the *contrasexual* genealogy that seeks to demystify the concept of an ahistorical sexuality. Preciado does not deconstruct one specific discourse but draws on a wide range of technologies and discourses which have produced knowledge about the body and its (sexual) practices. However, as much as the *lesbian phallus* holds more of an 'interesting than satisfying' quality for Butler (Butler 1993:57), the *dildo* for Preciado is characterised as critical rather than practical (in its application) even though it needs to be practiced.

The subversion of the phallus is dependent on new actions and definitions, which will create new frames of reference. By placing the *dildo* in the position of the phallus, Preciado installs a new relationship between body parts (namely genitals), sexual interconnections between bodies and the forms of power which are enacted. Only by re-appropriation can this relationship be made fruitful for the deconstruction of the heterosexual matrix which produces specific organs as the origin of pleasure (Preciado 2003:60–7). The focus on genitals to which we are subjected is the basis for the interconnection between sexuality and reproduction. The idea of genitals being opposite and complementary at the same time is at the heart of the ongoing reiteration of sexual/gender difference. Preciado seeks to untie the supposedly linear relation between sexual pleasure, sexuality (and orientation) and procreation, and replaces this nexus with the idea of *dildotopia*. The symbolic order that can produce such a proposal and make it seem plausible is at the same time the foundation for its resistance. The ironic undertone employed throughout by Preciado allows us to analyse the orders we are living in and therefore it serves to find out what *not* to do in an anarchist sense, that is, subjecting oneself and one's body and desire to hierarchical structures and architectures. *Dildotopia* destroys the hierarchies between body parts with regard to sexual pleasure: all body parts are equal; therefore, it is rather an anti-cracy with regard to bodily features and pleasures. Preciado proposes that philosophy needs to learn from the *dildo* (ibid.: 10) and I would suggest that maybe academics need to learn from irony, subversion and disobedience. The *dildo* does not exist; it just opens up new possibilities for doing philosophy. Rosi Braidotti has stated that 'one of the forms taken by the feminist cultural practice of "as if" is irony. Irony is a systematically applied dose of de-bunking; an endless teasing; a healthy deflation of over-heated rhetoric' (Braidotti 1998:127). In my reading, the *dildo* is an anarchist scream not of negation but of avowal by using this 'endless teasing' strategy that Braidotti describes. Preciado's *manifesto* can be read as a very basic form of ironic irritation that could be adapted by contemporary anarchism to be able to imagine it as a rupture in power structures.

The second part of the *manifesto* is a description of the *practices of contrasexual inversion*. In short: the *practices of contrasexual inversion* are various and infinitely extendable, re-workable and re-thinkable. They are based on *dildotectonics*, which is the 'contra-science' that 'explores the appearance, development and application of the dildo' (Preciado 2003:37). *Dildotectonics* is derived from *tecton*, the constructor, the creator who has to work around medical and psychological definitions to be able to understand the body as a terrain of dislocation (ibid.: 37). Basically, in the outline of the practices there are the 'workers of the anus', who have to sign a contract in which they state that their contract-bodies are not understood as man and woman but as subjects (a copy of the contract is printed in the book). The workers of the anus are 'the new proletarians of a possible *contrasexual* revolution' (ibid.: 18) because their bodies are equal in desire and practice and their architecture cannot be separated hierarchically. Moreover, the *dildo* can work with these workers of the anus in different but equal ways. The *contrasexual* society is devoted to the systematic deconstruction and the de-naturalisation of sexual practices as well as the order of gender. The *contrasexual* genealogical project proclaims the equality, not the sameness, of all speaking body-subjects, which conform to the terms of the *contrasexual* contract to investigate lust, desire and knowledge (ibid.: 10). The anus is for Preciado the centre for the 'work of a *contrasexual* deconstruction' (ibid.: 18) for every body

has one. Moreover, the anus is not intelligible within a 'heterocentristic economy'. The anus (as well as the mouth) can easily be reclaimed as a centre of lust and pleasure without being tied to reproduction or heteronormative romantic relationships (ibid.: 19). Michael O'Rourke argues correspondingly 'that the anus is indifferent to gender and cuts across orientations' (O'Rourke 2005). The idea of the contract is derived from SM practices, where partners, through signing the contract, decipher the erotic power structures, which in a heteronormative society are enforced as 'nature'. Preciado also states thirteen principles of the contrasexual society and uses cartoons and explicit descriptions and guidelines of how to practice *contrasexuality*. Preciado hereby draws on art performances and specific technologies, as well as a serious application of humour to philosophy. Opening up the space of bodily architecture and perceiving the concept of sexuality as a genealogy of technologies means to rearrange the conceptualisation of 'the human'.

The posthuman cyborg in dildotopia

For an anarchist society to emerge, I argue, the idea of 'the human' needs to be replaced by a *posthuman dildotopian* citizen; *per* – the *cyborg*.[13] This draws upon Donna Haraway's ironic myth of the *cyborg*, which, it should be noted, is only one possible conception, although one which has been theoretically well developed. Haraway has asked 'what kind of politics could embrace partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions of personal and collective selves and still be faithful, effective – and, ironically, socialist-feminist?' (Haraway 1991:157). What is termed here 'socialist-feminist' could as well be termed 'queerly post(-)anarchist' because what is envisioned is a liberated society built on personal and collective freedom. In answer to her own question, Haraway introduced the concept of the *cyborg*, which has the potential to be liberating in terms of the freedom from essentialist, humanist and identity-focused discourses. *Cyborgs* are hybrids; *cyborgs* do not have an origin or a truth to themselves but a variety of histories and narratives on which they can draw to construct themselves and to construct a political agenda which could be read as post(-)anarchist:

There is no drive in cyborgs to produce total theory, but there is an intimate experience of boundaries, their construction and deconstruction. There is a myth system waiting to become a political language to ground one way of looking at science and technology and challenging the informatics of domination – in order to act potently.

(Haraway 1991:181)

Cyborgs are an undissolvable arrangement of technologies, organic parts, discourses, images, relations, histories, artificial intelligences, psychological heritages and many more features. The idea of the *cyborg* is appealing as it offers a radical way of thinking about bodies and power. Human bodies are 'topographies of power' (ibid.). This, I argue, resonates with Preciado's statement that 'the bodily architecture is political' (Preciado 2003:18). The *cyborg* is no exception to this, but the *cyborg* accepts it and plays with it. Following Haraway, who proposed this category of fragmented, partial identification, we need to engage with this utopia/myth to be able to be politically effective. One of the preconditions is that we have to accept the cyborg as our ontology; the cyborg is a means by which we can study our existence, just as the *dildo* is the means by which we can interrogate our desires. The cyborg is genealogy as is the *dildo*. Such a perception can enable us to interrogate our ongoing construction through distinctions which function on the mechanisms and workings of power. The *cyborg* is the marker of the collapsing of three boundaries: first, the ideology of biological determinism; second, the ideology of technological determinism (assumed distinction between animal-human and the machine); and, third, the distinction between physicality and non-physicality (*cyborgs* are ether, they are quintessence) (Haraway 1991:153). Human nature can be (re) conceived as an effect of power which is rearticulated and re-produced permanently by the negotiation of the boundaries between human and animal, body and machine. The *cyborg* is a process because it consists of the ongoing transgression of these boundaries. The rearticulating and reinstalling of these boundaries happen according to the heteronormative technologies of the naturalisation of sex. Haraway's *cyborg* resists

the plot of original unity, out of which difference must be produced and enlisted in a drama of escalating domination of woman/nature. The *cyborg* skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense.

(Haraway 1991:151)

This echoes Preciado's claim to replace the social contract of nature (the hierarchisation of the bodily architecture with regard to reproduction) with another contract – here the *contrasexual*

contract. The *cyborg* is the *contrasexual* citizen, which becomes its own genealogy.

Probably most important for the anarchist project is Haraway's concept of non-identity (and) politics, which claims political processes as processes of affinity. Affinity is a relationship grounded in choice, not identity. Affinity is not about kinship but about desire. 'Affinity instead of identity' is the *cyborg*'s processual, temporary and spatial specific strategy of forming coalitions. *Cyborg*s do not need a natural matrix of unity and accept that no one construction can hold the whole. This links to the concept of resistance, as I have discussed it earlier, as well as to the concept of contra-productivity, which assumes that practices are always exercising power, even when they are aimed at the hegemonic structure of power relations. Any kind of action derives from the formerly existing framework of power and only works in its boundaries. Theoretical and political actions necessarily have to refer to the discourses they emerge from, but there is the possibility of undermining them and contradicting them (just as with the quotation of the *dildo*). The *cyborg* has chosen the form of myth to open up new possibilities of identification and to escape restraining psychoanalytical narratives. The *cyborg* does not expect to be saved by her father through the production of a heterosexual partner – there is no imaginary unity/wholeness for the *cyborg* to be promised by the organic family or the oedipal project. Haraway's *cyborg* myth is

an effort to contribute to social-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end. The *cyborg* incarnation is outside salvation history. Nor does it mark time on an oedipal calendar, attempting to heal the terrible cleavages of gender in an oral symbiotic utopia or post-oedipal apocalypse.

(Haraway 1991:150)

Cyborgs are non-oedipal narratives with a different logic of repression, which we need to understand for our survival. The *cyborg* is a monster because it has to be fragmented and newly composed; it is both collective and individual. The *cyborg* does not have a problem with contradictions – they cannot be resolved. *Cyborg*s recount, re-narrate the narratives of origin. *Cyborg* politics means to fight for language but, in the same vein, to fight against perfect communication. It means to fight against the central dogma of phallogocentrism, which is the one code that translates everything accurately and accordingly. The *cyborg* does not derive from or draw on any enlightened or logical narrative, *per* is a contra-production.

The *posthuman* subject, as Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston have conceptualised it, is in the same situation as the *cyborg*: it cannot be thought of as 'human'; it is a hybrid, multiple and decentred. It has no outside and no inside; its desires are splattered, perverse, deviant: 'Posthuman bodies are not slaves to master-discourses', Halberstam and Livingston state (1995:2). They rather 'emerge at nodes where nodes, bodies of discourse, and discourse of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context' (Halberstam and Livingston 1995:2). These post-human bodies, Haraway's *cyborg* and Preciado's *contrasexuality*, as I argue, subscribe to a 'feminist embodiment [which] is not about fixed locations in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations … Embodiment is significant prosthesis' (Haraway 1991:195). Prosthesis as embodiment places the body outside anything supposedly natural and therefore apolitical. Even the orgasm, as Preciado states, is the result of technologies. Yet, this panorama is not as bleak as it sounds; instead it opens up new possibilities of configuring ourselves, our bodies, our desires. The reclaimed concept of technology reappears in the *posthuman* as it does in the *cyborg*:

posthuman bodies are the causes and effects of postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality, sex and its consequences. The posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image; it is a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a techno-body; it is as we shall see, a queer body. The human body itself is no longer part of 'the family of man' but of a zoo of posthumanities.

(Halberstam and Livingston 1995:3)

This scattered notion of the origin of the body is very much in line with the interrogative practice of *contrasexuality*. However, the *posthuman* body incorporates the dissolution of a 'direction/orientation' towards the desired object because it has no source or beginning. As Kenneth Dean and Brian Massumi write, 'liberation is never of the human, it is only ever from it' (Dean and Massumi 1992:167). Thereby, they testify to the contra-productivity of the genealogical *cyborg* who can rearrange per own embodiment, desires and practices in resisting moments – perhaps with the quotation of the *dildo*.

Therefore, the anarchised *posthuman* citizen and *per*'s relation to *perself* and others is based on 'becoming' in the Deleuzian sense because it recognises its emergences as utterly

genealogical. This genealogy of the *posthuman* takes into account the questions which it produces. The relationship of the *posthuman* to desire becomes clear when Halberstam and Livingston talk about sex, or rather turn-ons:

Sex only has currency when it becomes a channel for something besides its own drive for pleasure. Turn-ons are not sexual; sexuality is a dispersed relation between bodies and things: some bodies (such as male lesbians, female cockwearers, baby butches, generationalists, sadofethishists, women with guns) and some things (dildos, pistols, vegetables, ATM cards, computers, phones, books, phonebooks). Some turn-ons: women in suits looking like boys, women in suits wearing dildo looking like and being men, men without dicks, dicks without men, virtual bodyparts, interactive fantasy. What is bodily about sex? What is sexual about sex? What is gendered? Are posthuman bodies postgender? Is anything post anymore, or is this the beginning? The search for origins stops here because we are the origins at which imagined reality, virtual reality, gothic reality are all up for grabs. You are not human until you are posthuman. You were never human.

<p style="text-align:right">(Halberstam and Livingston 1995:8)</p>

This argument relates to and fits neatly with Preciado's description of the *contrasexual* subject, which I have translated into the *cyborg* and its emergence and also its homeland of *dildotopia*. The posthuman (or postgender) body is composed of all the 'interactive fantasies' which we can draw on to constitute our desires and pleasures. The *contrasexual manifesto* is composed to enable body subjects to interrogate knowledge and desire to be able to develop a contra-productive theory of *contrasexuality*, which is

a theory of the body which positions itself outside of the oppositions of masculine/feminine, homo/heterosexual. It defines sexuality as technology and views the different elements of the sex/gender system 'man', 'woman', 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', 'transsexual' as well as their practices and sexual identities – as machines, products, tools, apparatuses, gadgets, prosthetics, nets, applications, programs, interconnections, energy and information flows, disruptions and disruptors, keys, laws of circulation, boundaries, necessities, designs, logics, equipments, formats, accidents, trash, mechanism, exertions, re-dedication (devotion).

<p style="text-align:right">(Preciado 2003:11)</p>

In this sense, sexuality is derived from anything supposedly natural. It becomes pure practice that is open to change and de-hierarchisation through the constant negotiations between the participants. These participants recognise and accept themselves as *posthuman cyborgs* who do not subject *perselves* to the Law of the Father and who neglect the reign or the lack of the phallus. They celebrate the quotation of the *dildo* by recognising that they are their own genealogies, which they use to embody and live an anti-identitarian and anarchist *contrasexuality*. They are constantly becoming different.

Anarchise perself!

The discussion offered throughout this essay has been based on three premises. First, sex, gender and sexuality are produced by societal practices, technologies and discourses. Second, the bodily and psychological structures which emerge from these productions are governed and organised by hierarchical symbolic power structures (such as the phallus). Third, if we take into account that we are no longer 'humans' but rather 'becomings', we might be able to conceptualise ourselves as non-hierarchically organised (internally as well as externally). This opens the possibly of 'becoming-resisting'. The re-conceptualisation of identity or subjectivity in terms of its interconnectedness and dependency on social and technological relations could result in a post(-)anarchist self-conceptualisation as *cyborg*. The reclaiming of the body as a non-hierarchical structure might enable us to re-figure body parts with equal functions or characteristics in relation to erotogenicity, desire and pleasure. The discourses which are linked to a heterosexualised/gendered and naturalised hegemonic position are substantial, as Preciado shows for the orgasm, the *cyborg* and prosthetics. But in rewriting their history we might be able to reconstruct a materialising discourse which does not rely on identitarian, naturalising narratives of subjectivities, bodies and desires. This may function via the reclaiming of the body and the imaginary ego which is conceptualised by the phallus; and if we replace the phallus with the *dildo*, the phallogocentric symbolic structure and the hegemonic position of the genitals may be disrupted. The body's political architecture (organised by the hegemonic role of the phallus) could be reorganised in a non-hierarchical way with the help of the critical potential of the *dildo*. The subject of the *cyborg* might be situated in *dildotopia*, where *per* could develop a bodily ego and a bodily materalisation that is not hierarchically organised. The *cyborg* might be able to create a non-hierarchical relationship within *perself* but also in relation with other *cyborg* subjects/bodies: an anarchised way of living might be slowly activated and achieved by the *cyborg*. But we are not at this point yet; we still have to rewrite our

(psychological) history to be able to reconstruct the body, subjectivity and sexuality in a different anarchist fashion. In this essay, I attempted a utopian critical commentary on the arrangements of society and I have offered an alternative conceptualisation of sex, gender and sexuality which does not claim to be coherent; rather it attempts to rearrange certain narratives. I recommend familiarising *perself* with *contrasexuality*, one of many ways to anarchise *perself*.

Notes

1 This is an adaptation of the title of Saul Newman's article 'The War on the State: Stirner's and Deleuze's Anarchism' (Newman 2001).

2 The term dildotopia does not appear in Preciado's manifesto. The term that does appear (in the German translation) in the content page is Godotopia. Gode is the French word for dildo. It does not reappear in the (German) text. There is also a short film called *Godotopia*, referring to Preciado's manifesto, shot by Frédéric de Carlo and Frédéric Gies. It is called *B-Visible = Q-Visible? #1: Godotopia*. interview with the artists to be found on http://www.sarma.be/nieuw/bvisible/.%5Cbvisible%_5Cdecarlogies2.htm (accessed 10 July 2010).

3 The prefix 'post', which engendered significant debates with regards to post-modernity, post-structuralism, even post-feminism, of course also troubles post(-)anarchists. Following Stuart Sim's classification of different strands of 'post-Marxism', Benjamin Franks identifies three types of post(-)anarchism. First there is *post*-anarchism, which is basically not anarchism any more. Theorists coming from this angle reject 'traditional anarchist concerns', and instead propose the implementation of new critical approaches and tactics that have broken largely with anarchist thinking; they may even be 'antipathetic to traditional anarchism' (Franks 2007:131). These theorists basically argue that the key concepts and methodologies of 'classical' anarchism are no longer relevant and need to be replaced and overcome. Second, Franks identifies a 'redemptive post*anarchism*' that 'seeks the adoption into anarchism of poststructural theory to enrich and enliven existing practices, one which sees "anarchism" as it currently stands as lacking, but amenable to change' (Franks 2007:131). This postanarchism seeks to update anarchism by the inclusion of new theoretical developments such as (feminist) poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Third, Franks describes a postmodern anarchism 'that reapplies anarchist analyses and methods to the new globalized political economy, and concentrates on the actions of oppressed subjects' (Franks 2007:131). In this case, then, the 'post-' of post(-)anarchism means a resituating and an alteration, an updating of the classical anarchist core within postmodern culture. Of course all these variations do not exist hermetically but are combined by their users and developers mainly through an anarchist analysis of contemporary cultural movements. As I understand Franks' three approaches to post(-)anarchism, they all see anarchism as being distinct from poststructuralism and discuss the possibility of a fertile interaction between the two.

4 This distinction demarcates that it is subjectivation on a micro-level (being gendered/sexed or racialised, etc.) that makes it possible for macro-power structures to work on individuals. So, it could be said that the internalisation of hierarchy and domination on a structural, symbolic and psychological level is produced by micro-power (our production as subjects) and the power exercised on an institutional level could be considered as operating on a macro-power level (including administrative, institutional [state] structures). Even though I have a slight aversion towards this distinction because the terms 'macro' and 'micro' seem to imply a quality in intensity or impact, this is (at the time) a valuable division that might help to approach power differently from a variety of perspectives.

5 I want to add here that Nietzsche's work has been received very differently in Anglophone contexts in comparison to German contexts. In Germany Nietzsche's philosophy has often been problematised because his '*Herrenmenschentum*' (usually translated as the 'superman') has been adapted for nationalist and fascist propaganda. Due to the translation of a certain body of work, the Anglophone reception has been different and certain aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy have been neglected.

6 I use the _ in order to make space for individuals who do not identify as male or female. The terms s_he, him_her, and his_her designate a space by the _ that includes people who do not feel that the pronouns or the pronominal adjectives of he/she, his/her, him/her denote their identities. This is done in line with the author 's_he' who published an article called 'Performing the Gap – Queere Gestalten und geschlechtliche Aneignung' in the German magazine *arranca* 28 (http://arranca. nadir.org). Further down I will replace the _ with the unifying yet unlimited pronoun of *per* to press ahead with my agenda in this essay.

7 It is not possible due to the length of this essay to make clear the differences between identity and subjectivity. The reader may forgive me if I use these two terms interchangeably even though they have been used in very distinct ways by a variety of researchers. However, identity could be understood as a socio-political concept of a person's position in society and subjectivity could be seen as a more psychological concept which derives from the contextualisation of personal experience and psychological make-up.

8 Since there is no English publication yet all the translations are my translations based on the 2003 German edition.

9 In order to understand this logic one has to look into the processes of intersexualisation. The surgical treatment of intersexualised people includes the logic of either 'poking a hole or building a pole' in order to make the intersexualised child a viable member of society, i.e. either a penis-man or a vagina-woman (see Holmes 2008 for this quotation by a surgeon).

10 Butler has also worked on this through the Althusserian notion of interpellation (Butler 1990). Concerning the gendering and sexualisation of the subject it is the announcement at birth, 'It's a boy/it's a girl'. Preciado convincingly shows that this interpellation is a performative operation theatre in which all babies are ascribed an identity. Even those babies who block this machinery of ascription do not escape some form of identity: they become intersexual babies.

11 For a historical account on the technology of orgasm, see also Maines (2001).

12 The German text uses the word '*Affekt*', which is why I translated it directly. The term affect, however, could here better be replaced by the words 'emotions', 'feelings', 'desires' and/or 'attractions'.

13 The ungendered pronoun 'per' is derived from Marge Piercy's novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1978) and replaces the personal gendered pronouns him_her, he_she with the short form of the ungendered 'per-son'. For Donna Haraway

the concept of the cyborg carries the pronoun she/her because the cyborg is intrinsically feminist and located in a feminist politics which still has to fight essentialist tendencies. In this essay I want to use the pronoun *per* because it enables us to conceive of the cyborg as non-gendered, at least in regard to the basic workings of language.

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Chapter 5

On anarchism

An interview with Judith Butler[1]

Jamie Heckert

JH: A number of scholars have drawn on your work in developing anarchist theory, including myself and several other contributors to this volume (particularly Lena Eckert). This has been enabled by recent developments, variously labelled 'postanarchism', 'poststructuralist anarchism' and 'postmodern anarchism', in which the writings of figures such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard and Baudrillard are read as continuous with (and perhaps superseding) anarchist traditions of theory and praxis. (Are you familiar with this body of literature, by the way?) Reading your work in an anarchist light has also been enabled by your public statements, including a recent interview in which I heard you refer to yourself as a 'provisional anarchist'.[2] Could you say a bit more about your relationship with anarchist identity?

JB: I am not sure I understand anarchism as an identity, but rather as a movement, one that does not always function in a "continuous" fashion. There are at least two points of reference within contemporary politics for my concerns. The one has to do with Anarchists Against the Wall. The other has to do with the way in which queer anarchism poses an important alternative to the rising movement of gay libertarianism. Although I am sure that the anarchists against the wall in Israel/Palestine are interested in the history of the anarchist movement, it seems to me that this is a case in which direct action against a military force and a segregationist politics is a very powerful event. If you follow, for instance, the weekly demonstrations at Bi'lin, you can see that human bodies are put into the path of machines that are building the separation wall, are exposing themselves to tear gas, and literally producing an interruption and redirection of military power. The point is to enter into the scene, the building, the movements, to stop them, to redirect them, but also to deploy the body as an instrument of resistance. Of course, it is important that there are cameras there, on the scene, and these machines function as counter-machines, documenting Israeli state violence, but also interrupting its effort to control media coverage of its own actions. Since racism is at the basis of this segregation wall, we see as well the "scandal" of violence being done against Israeli activists. Of course, the outrage is much greater against those sorts of injuries and deaths than against any that are inflicted against Palestinians or, in deed, other internationals on the scene. There is an important "queer anarchist" component to these demonstrations, and it has to do with episodic, direct action, drawing on older traditions from ACT UP, for instance. But it also has to do with exposing and stopping the violence of an ostensibly legal authority.

I think this last is important to point out, since when the legal regime is itself a violent regime, and legal violence consumes all recourse to due process or legal intervention, then anarchism becomes the way of contesting and opposing the violent operation of the state.

Compare this with new forms of gay libertarianism that we have seen emerging in places like the UK, Belgium, and the Netherlands. There the clearly racist opposition to new immigration and the phobic relations to populations from North Africa or the Middle East, mainly Muslim, have recruited gay advocates who espouse personal freedom, the right to private property, and market relations. Although libertarian views such as these usually subscribe to a minimal or "private" state apparatus, these proponents of gay libertarianism invariably do the bidding of the state, supporting anti-immigration efforts, and defending forms of nationalism or Eurocentrism that are patently exclusionary and racist. In this way, gay libertarians befriend the state, are even recruited by them, and help to sustain state violence against other minorities. It is important to recognize here that "freedom" means personal liberty, and it is in no way linked with the struggle for equality or the struggle against state violence. But any minority has to make allies among those who are subject to arbitrary and devastating forms of state violence. It is in this way that I think queer anarchism is "smarter" about state power, and legal violence in particular. Gay libertarianism imagines it is defending the rights of individuals, but fails to see that individualism is a social form which, under conditions of capitalism, depends upon both social inequality and the violent power of the state. This last becomes clear in anti-immigration politics.

So anarchism in the sense that interests me has to do with contesting the "legal" dimensions of state power, and posing disturbing challenges about state legitimacy. The point is not to achieve anarchism as a state or as a final form for the political organization of society. It is a disorganizing effect which takes power, exercises power, under conditions where state violence and legal violence are profoundly interconnected. In this sense, it always has an object, and a provisional condition, but it is not a way of life or an "end" in itself.

JH: Thank you for that thoughtful and thought-provoking response. I am particularly moved by the clear appreciation of compassion and equality I read in your critique of building walls around nations or identities. To follow on from your last statement, can I ask here how you conceptualise the state? I'm thinking of Foucault's writing on governmentality and how it was prefigured by the Jewish anarchist philosopher Gustav Landauer when he wrote: "The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently." In this way, I wonder, is the practice of disrupting state violence, of troubling state power and the individualised identities with which it is intertwined, not also a way of living, of relating differently? In other words, is the undermining or overflowing of walls and borders not potentially a "continuous" process?

JB: My one worry about this formulation is that it can be taken to mean that the state is permanent. We can say that the state is permanent, but certain state formations are not. But maybe it is equally true to say that because there is no "state" that is not at once a state formation, states are the kinds of arrangements that come into being, alter, and are dissolved. It seems to me that the right to revolution depends on the possibility of the state being dissolved by the concerted will of the people. This is a certain power that popular sovereignty has over state sovereignty, and I want to hold on to this notion. It is true that certain states project their permanence, even try to institute that permanence, but they can only do this through

fortifying the effects of their legitimacy and, of course, their armed power – army and police alike. So does it not make more sense to say that the state is always in the process of re-instituting its effect of permanence, and that critical interventions can be made at the various sites where that re-institution takes place. In other words, that re-institution is not guaranteed, and that lack of guarantee can be exposed by strategies we call anarchist.

JH: Is there a connection between your conception of anarchism as intervening in the re-institution of the state and your earlier work on the performativity of gender?

JB: Perhaps the question is actually about the relationship between reiterative performatives and Walter Benjamin's influential distinction between law-preserving and law-founding violence. My sense is that every time law is reiterated, it is "re-founded" and "re-instituted." This becomes most important in relation to the general strike, that is, the strike that is not protected by law, but which aims to bring to a standstill an existing regime of law. One could say that we are sometimes under an obligation to pull the brake of emergency on gender norms. I suppose Irigaray meant something like this when she suggested we jam the machinery of sexual difference.

JH: I'm asking this because for many of us, particularly queer anarchists and anarcha-feminists, anarchism is simultaneously about interrupting or halting the institutionalisation of the state in favour of popular sovereignty *and* subverting everyday disciplinary identities and hierarchical relationships. It seems to me the latter has long been a theme in your work.

JB: Yes, it is. I would also point out that there is an operation of freedom and agency which is not the same as that which is stipulated as the personal liberty of the individual under liberal democratic regimes. Of course, I want legal protections for certain kinds of freedoms, but if the version of freedom produced by the idea of legal protection becomes all we think of freedom, then surely we are constrained in some unacceptable ways. It is important to point out that various forms of gender regulation and social hierarchy and exclusion work through domains of power that are not reducible to law, but this also means that the forms of resistance and claims to freedom we make cannot be fully conceptualized within the rubric of law. This is one way to insist that the claims of a radical social movement must exceed those of legal reform, even if those legal reforms are sometimes useful for that movement. My sense is that anarchism is an important mode of thought and action precisely when we have to figure out where and how to enter into regimes of power, what opportunities exist for their subversion. To some extent, this is a function of a contingent situation and the possibilities it opens, but this also means that agency is not always institutionalized or institutionalizable. In fact, if political agency is to remain critical, it must weigh the costs of institutionalization and resist any full institutionalization. This does not mean that we have to avoid all institutional practices, but only that they not become the restrictive norm for radical political change.

JH: I'm in agreement about the value of doing subversive work within institutional settings and also very aware of the challenges, emotional and political. Are there particular aspects or examples of anarchist, feminist and/or queer politics you particularly appreciate for enabling these operations of freedom, or even popular sovereignty?

JB: I am impressed with Anarchists Against the Wall and other actions against the wall at Bi'lin which continue to divert the military and have solicited great support from global networks. The rallies against the confiscation of Palestinian property in East Berlin have been growing, and they are heartening to see. I am also in favor of organizations that help non-documented peoples both in the US and in Europe, especially when that assistance has to remain below the radar of the law. In a sense, such actions are below the law, outside the law, even against the law, but are fundamentally movements to change law, and to hold existing law to broader standards of justice. My sense as well is that the student movements opposing the destruction of public education in many countries right now are invariably coming up against police force, and it is crucial to find ways to resist police violence, and to expose its criminal dimensions. Similarly, squatter activism that seeks to lay claim to properties and to claim rights of inhabitation by virtue of having made that claim and set up that abode – these are critical movements. Smuggling medical aid into the Palestinian territories when the borders are blocked has to be included among important movements of this kind. The large meetings in Chiapas against globalization a few years ago have to be included in my list, but so too do transgender activists who take to the streets with their queer allies in many countries even though it is precisely on the streets that they lack police protection or are subject to police violence. The same with unprotected sex workers (sometimes, as you know, these two groups overlap). I am hoping that in the state of Arizona there might be widespread non-compliance with the new racist laws. My hope is that every faculty member at Arizona University and Arizona State, for instance, will choose to teach Ethnic Studies courses now that they are legally banned. If everyone taught them, then the universities would be unable to enforce such a hideous law, and the law would become powerless.

JH: Now, here's a point I really want to explore: what enables the freedom of non-compliance? The way I understand it, it is not only this law which is vulnerable to non-compliance, but all law. Or, in other words, compliance is a necessary part of the re-founding and re-instituting of state power (in contrast, perhaps, to a collective reiteration of commitment to law produced through popular sovereignty, such as the EZLN[3] Revolutionary Laws). This compliance, in turn, is produced through various forms of state(-like) terrorism. As you wrote in *Bodies that Matter*, "There must be a body trembling before the law, a body whose fear can be compelled by the law, a law that produces the trembling body prepared for its inscription."[4] Is there something about anarchist(ic) practice that calms the trembling body so that you or I or anyone can act in ways unconstrained by fear of the law and the threats of violence with which it is intertwined, particularly against those bodies inscribed as subjectable to violation: women's bodies, queer bodies, brown bodies, criminal bodies, insane bodies, indigenous bodies, poor bodies, homeless bodies, undocumented bodies, animal bodies and all of the countless ways these inscriptions intersect? Or, in other words, what enables moments of, or transitions to, popular sovereignty, in spite of state claims of power?

JB: If the body trembles, it is through the tremble, as it were, that we act. It may take the trembling to submit or to act, and either one can act to calm it – the first through the fantasy that compliance will satisfy the law and leave us alone; the second through a resistance that either works furtively through the appearance of compliance or openly defies, and has to withstand the future that comes, that has to initiate whatever future comes.

JH: Since we last corresponded the Israeli military has attacked the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in international waters killing several people, wounding many more and arresting hundreds. I'm struck by the words of Avital Leibovich, an Israeli military spokeswoman, quoted in Al Jazeera: "we have the right to defend ourselves."[5] How is it that people are, at times, able to become so disconnected from their empathy for others that the delivery of food and medical supplies is to be seen as an invasion by enemies? And what effects does this have on other intimate relationships with our own bodies

and the bodies of others?

JB: Of course, one has to follow a very specific paranoid sequence to understand how "self-defense" could possibly be invoked by the Israelis here. If the ship carrying food and aid breaks the blockade, then the blockade will be broken and other ships carrying guns and materials for the construction of bunkers and artilleries will arrive, and those ships will be (in part or in whole) from Iran, which means that Iran is docking in Gaza. Even so, the notion of self-defense only works if we accept the presupposition that the maritime border of Gaza ought to remain within Israel's sovereign authority, and there is no legal backing for such a claim. The other ways of justifying self-defense seem to emerge from imagining a group of "mercenaries" boarding the ship at a second location; but most of all, the self-defense claim is clearly refuted by the now highly documented and corroborated fact that the Israelis shot at the ship before boarding. So who precisely was defending themselves against attack?

For anarchism, the struggle is an important one, since we have good reasons for breaking bad laws. At the same time, when we see rogue states breaking international law, we have to respond with outrage. The point is not to be against all law, nor is it to live without any laws. The point, in my view, is to develop a critical relation to law which is, after all, a field of power, one that is differentially applied and supported. We have to be part of the struggle to make law just, but no existing law will tell us what that justice is. In this sense, we have to seek recourse to extra-legal norms and values to decide strategies in relation to law.

JH: You've spoken about anarchism a number of times in public talks, but this is the first time, I believe, you have written about it for a public audience. Could you say something about that?

JB: Actually, I wrote about it in relation to Benjamin's *A Critique of Violence*, and there I suggested that Benjamin posits an "extra-legal" perspective by which to judge criminal regimes of law.[6] When law becomes an instrument of state violence (and its coercive force is always in some ways implicated in that violence), then one has to engage forms of "disobedience" in order to call for another order of law. In this way, one has to become what Althusser called a "bad subject" or a provisional anarchist, in order to unbind the law from the process of subjectivation. This happens in the general strike when one has to fail as a worker and as a citizen in order to expose an unjust economic mode of exploitation or a violent state regime, or both. We do not have access to natural law at such a moment, but only a certain upsurge of freedom, critique, and also an exercise of a critical capacity, and a powerful negation. We might understand this upsurge as that part of popular sovereignty that is never fully codified in law, and upon which all law depends for its persistence, and which always potentially implies the dissolution of a particular legal code or regime.

JH: You've mentioned in this interview connections between anarchism and the transgression of, or halting of, gender norms. I see, too, connections with anarchism in your essay on surgical interventions done to intersex people, "Doing Justice to Someone".[7] Could you say a bit more about the connections you see between anarchism and transgender, intersex and genderqueer politics?

JB: Time and again the new political efforts to establish marriage as an issue of civic equality or "gays in the military" as an issue of unequal treatment before the law stay within the structures of conjugality and the military, and seek only to achieve political aims within those frameworks. But what happens to a movement when it ceases to question the value of the military or, indeed, of conjugality itself? It loses its critical capacity, and it breaks alliance with all those gay, lesbian, trans, queer, bi and intersex peoples who are struggling against heightened militarism, against structural racism and nationalism, against the brutality of the police in relation to sexual and gender minorities, and who are trying to find ways of living and desiring that are sustainable outside of marriage norms and free of police and psychiatric violence. This last seems to be the ultimate goal of any movement of sexual and gender minorities – one that actually thinks analytically about existing social structures and insists on producing new ones. Perhaps anarchism is in this sense linked to productive power.

JH: Do you have any other comments on links between anarchism and sexuality that we've not yet covered?

JB: Just one: that every effort, psychiatric or legal, to "regulate" sexuality causes damage and violence, but it also fails, since sexuality can be punished, but as long as the sexual person lives, sexuality cannot be extinguished by law (it would rather take "law" as its object than suffer a final death).

Notes

1 This interview took place by email between mid-March and mid-June 2010.

2 Untitled interview with Leonor Silvestri in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.megaupload.com/?d=M16XIW8Q (accessed 30 July 2010).

3 Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation).

4 Judith Butler (1993) *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, London: Routledge, p. 101.

5 Aljazeera.net (2010) 'Israel Attacks Gaza Aid Fleet'. Online. Available HTTP: http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/05/20105313304799535.html (accessed 1 June 2010).

6 Judith Butler (2006) 'Critique, Coercion, and Sacred Life in Benjamin's "Critique of Violence"', in Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan (eds), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, New York: Fordham University Press.

7 Judith Butler (2001) 'Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7(4): 621–6; reprinted in Judith Butler (2004) *Undoing Gender*, New York/London: Routledge.

Poetic interlude 3

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Tom Leonard
I know what it is

to be powerless
I know what it is

to be made to lie low
while the unknown enemy

invades you
what it is

not to have words
for what is happening

for grass and tree
and inanimate thing

to be
your only witness

on the clearest day
of a childhood

almost fifty years ago;
how I hate

male
fucking violence.

this day
I will wear

nor white nor red
nor account myself solitary

instead
I remember the many

who know what it is
to be made to lie low

while the enemy
known or unknown

invades
in dead of night

or in the field
that spoil of war

that

earth's oldest currency

Chapter 6

Love and revolution in Ursula Le Guin's *Four Ways to Forgiveness*[1]

Laurence Davis

Introduction

What is the connection between love and revolution? Judging by the contemporary 'common sense' understanding of these terms, the answer would appear to be 'very little'.

When people think about love, they typically think of something essentially insular and private, a mixture of sexual attraction and day-to-day caring about another person that tends to detach the individuals concerned from wider social circumstances. One of the characters in a Raymond Carver short story expresses this popular understanding of the term quite nicely when he says, 'You know the kind of love I'm talking about now. Physical love, that impulse that drives you to someone special, as well as love of the other person's being, his or her essence, as it were. Carnal love and, well, call it sentimental love, the day-to-day caring about the person' (Carver 1995:143).

When people think about revolution, they tend to think of a form of governmental change through the violent seizure of state power. Many dictionary definitions reflect this common understanding of the term. Michael Kimmel quotes one such definition in a relatively recent sociological study of revolutions:

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines revolution as 'A complete overthrow of the established government in any country or state by those who were previously subject to it; a forcible substitution of a new ruler or form of government.' This definition implies that revolutions take place on the political level, involving government and rulers, and that they must be 'complete' and successful in order to count as revolutions. It also equates the imposition of a new ruler with a revolutionary transformation of society.

(Kimmel 1990:4)

From this perspective, the gap between love and revolution would appear to be unbridgeable. Love is exclusively private and personal, while revolution is entirely public and political. Love is the prerogative of two people absorbed in their relationship with one another, while revolution is the job of professional revolutionaries bent on the violent overthrow of government.

Self-proclaimed revolutionaries, too, have by and large tended to overlook the connections between love and revolution. While Sheila Rowbotham quite rightly points out that, 'despite denunciation from outside and attempts at exorcism from within, the idea of revolution and the idea of freedom in love have enjoyed a remarkably deep and long lasting relationship' (Rowbotham 1972:46), Ulrike Heider also accurately observes that 'the history of social movements knows but few attempts to revolutionise both society and the individual simultaneously' (Heider 2000:134). Many Marxists inspired by the Leninist model of revolutionary organisation, for example, have tended to dismiss concern with love – and indeed feeling and emotion in general – as a self-indulgent luxury of the privileged classes (Jaggar 1988:232). Rowbotham highlights one of the unfortunate by-products of this suppression of feeling and emotion in the following telling caricature of the Leninist conception of the revolutionary leader: 'This individual militant appears as a lonely character without ties, bereft of domestic emotions, who is hard, erect, self-contained, controlled, without the time or ability to express loving passion, who cannot pause to nurture, and for whom friendship is a diversion' (Rowbotham 1979:68). According to Rowbotham, whose reflections are based in part on her personal experiences of various activist milieux, the problem is not confined to Leninists alone. Rather, 'most' Marxian-inspired left language is constantly distinguishing itself as 'correct' and then covering itself with a determined objectivity. The problem is thus one of the 'use of the concept of science in Marxism itself' (ibid.: 40).

In contrast to their ideological cousins and sometime political rivals, liberalism and 'scientific' socialism, most anarchists – like so many feminists, pacifists, ecologists, anti-imperialists, and libertarian and utopian socialists – regard the liberation of everyday life as a defining feature of

both their social ideals and the means of achieving them. The political thinker Murray Bookchin articulated this point with memorable clarity in the aftermath of the rebellions of the 1960s:

It is plain that the goal of revolution today must be the liberation of daily life. Any revolution that fails to achieve this goal is counter-revolution. Above all, it is *we* who have to be liberated, *our* daily lives, with all their moments, hours and days, and not universals like 'History' and 'Society'.

(Bookchin 2004 [1971]: 10)

In a similar vein, the fictional character Shevek in Ursula K. Le Guin's anarchist utopian novel *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* , remarks that '[y]ou cannot buy the Revolution. You cannot make the Revolution. You can only be the Revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere' (Le Guin 2001 [1974]: 301). As these quotations suggest, anarchists have not been content simply to theorise or strategise revolutionary alternatives. They have also embodied revolutionary change in their daily lives, thus spawning an enormously creative counterculture consisting of (amongst other things) free art, free schools, free media and, of course, free love.[2] Even anarchist revolutionaries, however, have frequently failed to question or challenge the sharp dichotomy between public and private which has dominated so much of Western civilisation, and which has grown increasingly polarised and gendered with the development of capitalist societies.[3] That is to say, they have frequently failed to question or challenge the organisation of our lives

around two realms: a private realm where women are most in evidence, where 'natural' functions like sex and the bodily functions related to procreation take place, where the affective content of relationships is primary, and a public realm where men are most in evidence, where 'culture' (books, schools, art, music, science) is produced, where money is made, work is done, and where one's efficiency at producing goods or services takes precedence over one's feelings about fellow workers.

(Martin 1989, quoted in Harding 1998:26)

As a result, they have by default acted on the basis of commonplace assumptions regarding love and revolution absorbed uncritically from existing society.

Consider as an illuminating case in point the anarchist revolutionary activities in Spain during the years of the Spanish Civil War (1936–9). On the one hand, in many areas of Spain conventional patterns of interpersonal relationships were challenged, if not 'overturned altogether' (Ackelsberg 1988:29). Millions of people lived or worked in highly participatory and productive rural and urban collectives, marketed through cooperatives, and devised means of distributing material wealth more equally. In this revolutionary context the relations between men and women were transformed, and many women who had been particularly oppressed by illiteracy, poverty, male dominance and organised religion contributed to the revolutionary struggle as comrades. This was particularly true in the rural collectives, in a number of which women actively participated, took positions of responsibility and experienced a dramatic increase in personal freedom (Ackelsberg 1988:35; 1993:378).

On the other hand, in spite of frequent rhetorical criticisms of 'bourgeois' forms of marriage and sexuality, most anarchist revolutionaries in Spain continued to regard personal life and domestic arrangements as entirely private matters. They did not question the authority of males within the family, and assumed as a matter of course that women would take responsibility for domestic chores (Ackelsberg 1988:31–6; 1993:374–6). Still less did any but a small minority challenge the prevailing view of homosexuality as a moral corruption,[4] or consider the relationship between the social organisation of intimate life and revolutionary socio-political change. Revolutionary women were in general in advance of their male comrades in calling attention to the point that marriage and birth control arrangements, access to information about sexuality and the like were not simply private matters, but even in the wartime publications of the revolutionary anarchist women's organisation Mujeres Libres there was surprisingly little attention paid overall to issues of love and sexuality (Ackelsberg 2000:109). Moreover, what little attention was paid to them petered out almost completely by the end of 1937, as wartime pressures and the need to cement progressive alliances made such concerns seem to be a disposable luxury. The unfortunate result, as Ackelsberg points out, was that once the initial revolutionary flurry had passed, many preexisting oppressive societal values governing sexuality (and women's sexuality in particular) were allowed to continue intact.

Influenced by the radical anti-slavery, anarchist, pacifist, and contemporary radical and black feminist traditions, Ursula K. Le Guin's almost entirely neglected[5] science fiction 'story suite'[6] *Four Ways to Forgiveness* (Le Guin 1997 [1995]) challenges some of the assumptions about

love and revolution referred to above, and shows us that they may be far more closely intertwined than is commonly imagined. My primary aims in the present essay are to elucidate this aspect of the narrative, draw out its anarchist dimensions and consider some of its political implications for our contemporary world. I will do so by means of close and politically focused textual analysis of the book's four interconnected stories, followed by concluding reflections on the historical experience of antebellum slavery that in part inspired the work, its contemporary non-fictional analogues in the revolutionary and feminist theory of bell hooks and George Lakey, and its continuing political relevance today.

'Betrayals'

The bleak setting of *Four Ways to Forgiveness* is signalled on the very first page of its opening story, 'Betrayals'. Rather than begin by describing its setting directly, this book about distant imaginary worlds opens with an image of a single individual reading a book about a distant imaginary world. On the world of Gethen, the character muses, in an incredulous and reflective pause in her reading, there has never been a war. Her incredulity indicates to us immediately that hatred and war rive her own world, Yeowe. The reflective pause – during which she speculates, 'What would that world be, a world without war? It would be the real world' (Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 7) – creates a space for the reader to reflect on the artificial political construction of violence in her or his own social 'reality'. It also suggests the futility of trying to escape from the destructive effects of political violence by retreating into a private world based on very different principles: 'Any peace one of us can make in our life is only a denial that the war is going on, a shadow of the shadow, a doubled unbelief' (ibid.: 7).

As if in tacit confirmation of the validity of these ruminations, the narrative shifts swiftly from Yoss' thoughtful reading to the tale of Wada and Eyid, two star-crossed lovers whose sad story echoes the one told by Shakespeare in his classic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. Like Romeo and Juliet, young Wada and Eyid are madly and passionately in love. Thanks to the kindness of Yoss they have been able to express their passion in secret for some time, but they cannot live openly in partnership because of the long-running feud between their respective families. Their passion, the narrator observes tellingly, was 'trapped in the hatred of the old' (ibid.: 9). Eventually, we discover later in the story, it is smothered by that hatred.

For all its sentimental interest, the tragic love story of Wada and Eyid is but a small tale within a much larger story. The primary focus of 'Betrayals' is another more mature and atypical love story that suggests a very different relationship between the personal and the political. As those who are familiar with the story will know, I am of course speaking of the love that blossoms between Yoss and Abberkam. Abberkam, or 'Chief Abberkam', as Yoss calls him when they first meet, is, like Yoss, a refugee from the endless war and grief that plague Yeowe. A former hero of the revolutionary liberation movement that freed Yeowe from its longstanding status as a colony of the slave-owning sister world of Werel, Abberkam is by the time we encounter him also the disgraced ex-leader of Yeowe's first World Party. Having lied, betrayed his supporters and embezzled public funds, Abberkam is not only a symbol of the fallen 'perfect politician' (as Yoss accurately describes him, with some justifiable disgust), but also an embodiment of the dominance drive evident in so many 'real world' revolutions.

In order to see this point more clearly, it may be helpful to step back from the text for a moment in order to consider Le Guin's reflections about revolution in a recent essay entitled 'A War without End' (Le Guin 2004). Near the end of this essay, Le Guin hazards an explanation of why it is that revolutions generally fail. Her explanation takes the form of a commentary on the poet Audre Lorde's observation that you can't dismantle the master's house with the master's tools: 'Revolutions generally fail. But I see their failure beginning when the attempt to rebuild the house so everybody can live in it becomes an attempt to grab all the saws and hammers, barricade Ole Massa's toolroom, and keep the others out. Power not only corrupts, it addicts' (ibid.: 217). In other words, revolutions tend to go astray because of the inclination of some revolutionaries to make use of and eventually monopolise the very mechanisms of power that their masters formerly used to oppress them.

These comments, while overstated when framed as an explanation of the root cause of revolutionary failure – there are many complex reasons why revolutions fail, and it is probably a

mistake to try to identify any one root cause of the phenomenon – are nevertheless highly illuminating when interpreted more modestly as a persuasive account of one of the primary reasons why revolutions generally fail. Like George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, they remind us of the ease with which the desire to dominate may itself dominate the revolutionary process and make a mockery of its most noble ideals. They are also quite interesting for what they reveal about the unorthodox and elusive politics of *Four Ways to Forgiveness*.

Consider once more the character of Abberkam. Initially we know him only by way of his public reputation. An elected Chief of one of the principal tribes of Yeowe, he rose to prominence during the last years of revolutionary struggle against the Werelian colonisers by leading a mass movement for 'Racial Freedom'. The main aim of the movement, institutionalised in a World Party and symbolised by the image of a curved sword, was to ensure that nobody lived on Yeowe but its own people. In practice this territorialist policy entailed the exclusion not only of the slave-owning Werelians, but also of the inhabitants of other peaceful worlds opposed to slavery, including representatives of the Ekumen (a non-directive, information-gathering consortium of peaceful worlds that features repeatedly in Le Guin's science fiction writings). The policy also encouraged protracted violence even after the Liberation, as the habit of killing Werelians learned during the revolutionary struggle mutated into internecine conflict among power-hungry tribes and city chiefs. While Abberkam strove to prevent this violence, he did so not in the service of a struggle to end domination and institutionalised hierarchy,[7] but in order to secure his own position as the most powerful politician on Yeowe. As is all too frequently the case with ambitious politicians, this quest for supreme political power in turn degenerated into corruption – debauchery, embezzlement, secret plots, betrayal, etc. – and his eventual downfall and public disgrace.

The occasion for us to see beyond this one-dimensional public image comes when Yoss recognises that Abberkam is, like herself, a 'soul in pain', and is impelled to do what she can to ease his suffering. As in so many other of Le Guin's writings, love here begins in shared pain, in the conscious decision to reach out to a stranger in order to help them in a time of need. One thinks, for example, of Shevek's remarks to his boyhood friends at the end of chapter 2 of *The Dispossessed*:

All of us here are going to know grief; if we live fifty years, we'll have known pain for fifty years. And in the end we'll die … There are times I – I am very frightened. Any happiness seems trivial. Any yet, I wonder if it isn't all a misunderstanding – this grasping after happiness, this fear of pain … If instead of fearing it and running from it, one could … get through it, go beyond it. There is something beyond it. It's the self that suffers, and there's a place where the self – ceases.

(Le Guin 2001 [1974]: 60–1)

Little does Shevek know when he makes these remarks that one of the friends present, young Takver, will one day become his life partner, his constant companion through times of suffering as well as joy. Similarly, Yoss has no idea when she first goes to see Abberkam at his house that the two of them will eventually form an intimate bond. She goes because she is concerned for his welfare. She remains because she finds him convulsed with a high fever, and returns because doing so apparently satisfies her desire to be 'useful'.

During these visits Yoss and Abberkam talk and get to know one another better. Love and respect do not come easily, however. Because both are exceptionally proud and strong-willed individuals accustomed to being in positions of authority, their initial interaction takes the form of a battle of wills. Abberkam tends to orate rather than communicate, except when employing his formidable charm in order to try to seduce Yoss (as he has seduced and abandoned so many other women in the past), while Yoss stubbornly refuses to admit to herself that she feels anything for Abberkam other than pity and contempt.

The point at which this awkward relationship blossoms into love is the pivotal point near the end of the story when Abberkam finally divests himself of the terrible burden of his politician's ego by risking his life on behalf of another. Specifically, when he sees from afar that Yoss' house has caught fire, he rushes heedlessly into the collapsing structure in order to save her. While she is in fact already safe, it is only thanks to his intervention that Yoss' beloved pet cat is spared from the flames. En route home to tend his injuries he encounters Yoss, informs her of what has just happened, and comforts and consoles her in her time of need. He also offers her a new home with him, as Yoss touchingly discovers when she arrives at his house and finds that the peaceful old room she had grown attached to during her sick calls has been lovingly prepared for her.

The story concludes on an open-ended note, with the possibility of a loving relationship between the two based on trust, truth, respect for the independent views and personal traits of the other, open communication and shared suffering as well as joys. The relationship may well not last, but both are at least genuinely committed to trying to make it work. The measure of Abberkam's commitment is indicated by his heartfelt confession to Yoss that while he did not 'hold to the one noble thing' in the past – he repeatedly betrayed his son's mother, other women, himself – she, Yoss, gave him the 'beautiful' opportunity to do so in the present. The redemptive nature of these remarks is almost certainly not lost on Yoss, who earlier in the story responds to Abberkam's use of the very same expression ('hold to the one noble thing')byoffering to read from the religious book in which the quotation appears. In that instance, Abberkam was responding to Yoss' observation that young Wada and Eyid clung to their love for each other as if they knew that it was their only truth in a world filled with hatred and lies. The repetition of the phrase in the very different circumstances of the closing pages of the story suggests that Yoss and Abberkam may be able to forge a more lasting relationship than did the doomed young lovers because their commitment to one another extends beyond the private pursuit of pleasure. In contrast to the fearful love of Wada and Eyid, and indeed in contrast to the currently popular conception of love represented by the Raymond Carver passage quoted at the start of this chapter (p. 103), the intimate love that Yoss and Abberkam come to feel for one another is a *transformative* and healing force that helps them to overcome at least a small part of the legacy of corruption and domination left by Abberkam's betrayal of the revolution.

'Forgiveness Day'

As in 'Betrayals', love and respect do not come easily to the two central characters of 'Forgiveness Day', the whimsical and endearing second composition in Le Guin's four-part story suite. In this case the narrative unfolds on the slave-owning world of Werel, and the chief protagonists are an Ekumenical diplomat (Solly) and her Werelian military bodyguard (Teyeo).

Very cleverly, our introduction to the setting and characters of the story is initially confined to a vertiginous glimpse of the world from the perspective of the pampered and hence apparently rather callow Envoy Solly. In stark contrast to Abberkam or Yoss, or indeed any of the other characters in *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, Solly has led a remarkably privileged life. As a result of this privileged background, she is easily bored with and quick to judge those she meets. She has little time or patience for either the embassy staff or the official representatives of her host world. Her greatest ire, however, is reserved for her Werelian bodyguard, Rega (a military title, translated by her as 'Major') Teyeo. In the opening pages of the story, narrated entirely from Solly's perspective, Teyeo is described variously as as stiff and cold as rigor mortis, stiff as a stick, rigid, a stuffed shirt, controlling and an officer officially incapable of humanity. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it is likely that many readers (including this one, I must confess) will be inclined initially to accept this caricature, especially insofar as they empathise with Solly's plight as an enlightened feminist, humanist and secularist on a world marred by gender hierarchies, slavery and religious war.

Having been taken in by Solly's rather hasty and harsh assessment of the major, we feel for his humanity all the more deeply when the narrative perspective of the story suddenly shifts and we have an opportunity to see the world from his point of view. The ensuing character sketch of Teyeo is both utterly convincing and deeply affecting, a tribute to Le Guin's formidable powers of empathy and imagination. Among other things, we learn that Teyeo's childhood years were shaped by the stark discipline of a poor military household. His days typically began at five in the morning, and were filled with lessons and fenced with disciplines. He spent much of his time alone, and learned to value silence and good manners. Because he studied only the history and literature of his own people, he quite naturally adopted their relatively conservative attitudes towards women and foreigners. Like others of his veot-class military background, he came to value above all else self-sufficiency, competence, responsibility, courage, honour and self-respect.

The formative experience of Teyeo's life is his extended posting on Yeowe in the service of a war to put down the anti-colonial slave revolution. Tragically, as he continues to fight a losing

battle against the rebels, his wife lies dying on Werel of complications related to a fever. Only when he returns to his home world after over seven years of senseless carnage does he learn that she is dead. He also discovers with great bitterness and an increasingly consuming sense of anger that the army on Yeowe in which he so loyally served has essentially been written off by his government. Insult is added to injury when, instead of honouring his sacrifice, his government and society make him feel like a useless relic of a past best forgotten. Desolate, alone, unemployed and increasingly plagued by an unfamiliar sense of self-doubt, he attempts to make himself useful in the new order of things by studying the ways and mores of the Ekumen. Le Guin's wise and infinitely compassionate narrator comments as follows: 'Not sure what he needed to know, he floundered about in the network, bewildered by the endless information available, in creasingly aware that he was no intellectual and no scholar and would never understand Alien minds, but doggedly driving himself on out of his depth' (Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 65). In the process of trying to educate himself, Teyeo makes the acquaintance of a Hainish lecturer and diplomat named Old Music. The contact proves to be fortuitous, as Old Music enlists his services as a member of the Embassy Guard. It is in this capacity that he is assigned to protect a 'headstrong' young Envoy named Solly, whom he quickly comes to regard as 'an aggressive, spoiled child with the sexuality of an adult, given the responsibility of a diplomat in a dangerously unstable country' (ibid.: 69).

The idea of a relationship developing between Solly and Teyeo thus appears even more implausible than it did in the case of Yoss and Abberkam. As in 'Betrayals', however, circumstances change drastically when they are thrown together by developments outside their control, and they begin to bond in response to the impulse to mutual aid. I won't attempt to convey here the wonderfully farcical quality of Le Guin's narration of the events that unfold on the day of the Festival of Forgiveness. Suffice to say that Solly is kidnapped in a confusing melee in which the major is injured while leaping to her defence, and the two of them are imprisoned in a small, windowless room in the basement of a house.

Notwithstanding their physical proximity, at first they maintain rigid personal boundaries that neither dares to cross. Over time, however, each develops a new-found respect for the independent personality and views of the other. More specifically, Teyeo comes to respect Solly's courage and resourcefulness in the face of danger and adversity, while she begins to appreciate the value of his restraint, formality and quietness. These realisations in turn induce thoughtful critical reflection of both a personal and political nature.

Solly, for example, ponders for the very first time the implications of living one's life as a project extending over time. 'It was curious', she reflects,

how his stiff manner, his manners, which had always shunted her aside, cut her out, here had quite another effect: his restraint and formality reassured her that she was still part of the world outside this room, from which they came and to which they would return, a world where people lived long lives. What did long life matter? she asked herself, and didn't know. It was nothing she had ever thought about before.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 87)

And again: 'I keep thinking about long life, about living long … Something about thinking of life as long makes a difference. Like having kids does. Even thinking about having kids. It's like it changes some balance' (ibid.: 89). She also reflects on the invisible but absolute physical barriers between herself and Teyeo, and these thoughts lead her to a mature appreciation of the stultifying constraints of slave societies: 'He was only maintaining, under incredibly difficult circumstances, the rigid restraint he had always shown. Not just he … all of them … It was the mentality of a slave society: slaves and masters caught in the same trap of radical distrust and self-protection' (ibid.: 90). When one recalls the pampered diplomat at the beginning of the story who blithely took for granted her enormous freedom, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the character transformation these words express is in its own small way revolutionary.

Teyeo, too, undergoes enormous changes during their captivity. When Solly endeavours to communicate with him about the terrible waste involved in maintaining the institution of slavery, he responds with a measure of honesty and critical social awareness completely at odds with his veot-class background. 'We learn to … close ranks', he acknowledges haltingly after a long reflective pause, 'You're right, it wastes … energy, the spirit. You are open' (ibid.: 92). Solly appears to appreciate the enormous significance of these remarks: 'His words cost him so much, she thought, not like hers that just came dancing out of the air and went back

into it. He spoke from the marrow. It made what he said a solemn compliment, which she accepted gratefully' (ibid.: 92). Later, near the end of the story, Teyeo quite remarkably even contemplates the possibility of revolution on Werel.

Whether such events will ever come to pass neither he nor we can foresee at the time, but what is clear is that Teyeo has experienced a revolutionary change of consciousness in the process of forging a loving bond with Solly. As we have already seen, this transformation is not confined to his worldview alone. As he and Solly communicate their fears and dreams to one another they both change and grow together. By the end of the story they are partners in the fullest sense of the word. Like the budding partnership between Yoss and Abberkam, their relationship is rooted in trust, truth, respect for the independent views and personal traits of the other, open communication and shared suffering as well as joys. Moreover, and very importantly, their love for one another does not lead to insular self-absorption and detachment from the troubles of society. To the contrary, it cultivates respect for difference and sensitivity to the suffering of others. In Teyeo's case, it prompts him, two years after his own freedom from captivity, to free his family's assets (slaves) by an act of irrevocable manumission. In both cases, it enables them to play prominent and constructive parts in the revolutionary events described in the latter two stories of *Four Ways to Forgiveness*. Once again we see love represented as a transformative force, one that in this instance nurtures not only individual growth but principled and non-violent revolutionary social change as well.

The personal and political dimensions of the love portrayed in 'Forgiveness Day' are apparently compatible, for we are informed in a touchingly romantic coda that Solly and Teyeo eventually marry and live together in fulfilment for many years. In the narrator's words,

In all her [Solly's] travels and posts she was accompanied by her husband, a Werelian army officer, a very handsome man, as reserved as she was outgoing. People who knew them knew their passionate pride and trust in each other. Solly was perhaps the happier person, rewarded and fulfilled in her work; but Teyeo had no regrets. He had lost his world, but he had held fast to the one noble thing.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 106–7)

The ending of the story would thus appear to be an unambiguously happy one.

And yet, in spite of this seeming absence of ambiguity, the reader is left pondering an unresolved question of great significance. Shortly before Solly and Teyeo are released from their captivity, and shortly after they make love to one another for the very first time, Teyeo reflects as follows on their situation:

It was curious … how little sex changed anything … the only thing that was truly different was something he had no word for. Sex, comfort, tenderness, love, trust, no word was the right word, the whole word. It was utterly intimate, hidden in the mutuality of their bodies, and it changed nothing in their circumstances, nothing in the world, even the tiny wretched world of their imprisonment.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 104)

The troubling question this passage raises is whether something so small and socially insignificant as the love two people feel for one another can really shake the foundations of society. This is one of the primary questions to which we now turn in our analysis of the remaining two stories in Le Guin's story suite.

'A Man of the People'

While all four of the pieces in *Four Ways to Forgiveness* explore the relationship between love and revolution, the last two stories in the collection have a more overt and pronounced political focus than the first two. That is to say, they foreground the question of the nature of social revolution. According to one traditional understanding of the term explicated by Kimmel at the start of this chapter, a revolution refers to the complete overthrow of an established government by those who were previously subject to it, as well as the forcible substitution of a new ruler or form of government. True to her anarchist, pacifist and Taoist convictions, Le Guin challenges this power-centred understanding of revolutions by portraying in vivid fictional detail a radically different type of revolutionary movement concerned not with the violent seizure of political power but with the liberation of imagination, desire and human creative potential in everyday life. In stark contrast to the dogmatic, destructive, mechanically impersonal, yang-heavy revolutions of old, she provides us with an imaginative vision of a patient, constructive, organic and open-ended form of revolutionary practice ultimately rooted in a transformation of the individual spirit. She also offers us invaluable human-scale portraits of a new kind of revolutionary. The heroes of her tales are not great military leaders or ideologues, but teachers

and healers, a man born and raised in a simple pueblo village and a remarkable woman who overcomes slavery and sexual abuse to campaign for the complete emancipation of women as a necessary component of social revolution.

In 'A Man of the People', the protagonist in question is Havzhiva, short for Mattinyehedarheddyuragamuruskets Havzhiva. Apart from his unpronounceable name, it is difficult to find much not to like about Havzhiva, a man with the common touch whose overriding passion in life is an unwavering commitment to truth and the ethical use of knowledge. Born in a peaceful but insular pueblo community on the planet Hain, he leads a relatively happy and contented existence until a chance encounter with a family relation who left the community many years ago to become a historian triggers in him a restless desire to do the same. The meeting of minds also unbalances him by throwing his previously unquestioned pueblo value system into disarray. His life from that point onwards becomes a kind of spiritual quest to restore his lost sense of balance and wholeness on alien worlds seemingly bereft of clear, recognisable and authoritative moral horizons.

What begins as a seemingly personal quest evolves over time into a political one as well. Initially the main preoccupation of his life is the search for knowledge that will enable to him to see beyond the restricted confines of his present. Having grown up in an environment with almost no books, he consumes them with a passion once he gains access to the voluminous libraries of the Hainish network of cities and information centres called the temple. He also eagerly pursues another less ethereal form of knowledge apparently available in great abundance outside the confines of the pueblo. As the narrator explains,

He had been conscious mainly of his own increasingly fearless and careless transgression of what had been the rules. Not all the women wanted to have sex, and not all the women wanted to have sex with men, as he had soon discovered, but that still left an infinite variety … He had sought out women from off-world; sleeping with Aliens added exoticism to transgression, or, as he put it, was an enrichment of knowledge such as every historian should seek.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 128)

While he has more serious loving relationships at this point in his life as well, they too are primarily products of what is then still a very personal and inward-looking quest for liberating knowledge and emotional balance. Indeed, the two great early loves of his life founder for precisely this reason. An arranged relationship in the pueblo collapses because it cannot bear the weight of his impulse to transcend local knowledge, while a far more intense relationship in his student days breaks apart because he brings to it unrealistic expectations and demands spawned by his all-consuming need for internal balance.

Having arrived at the dispiriting conclusion that he has no hope of personal joy in his life, Havzhiva resolves to find fulfilment instead in the ethical use of knowledge. An opportunity for him to do so arises when he is assigned by the Ekumenical Ambassador on Yeowe ('a clever young Terran named Solly')as Envoy to a politically tumultuous region in the south called Yotebber. There he finds himself embroiled in a revolutionary struggle, albeit of a very different sort than the violent rebellion of the Yeowen slaves against their Werelian colonial masters. In this case the revolution consists of non-violent resistance conducted by Yeowen women unwilling to accept their continued subordination in a post-colonial order run exclusively by men. As one of their representatives (Dr Yeron) explains to the sympathetic Ekumenical Envoy,

The men think they have to be bosses. They have to stop thinking that. Well, one thing we have learned in my lifetime, you don't change a mind with a gun. You kill the boss and you become the boss … This is a matter of education … It will take a long time.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 143)

Havzhiva assists these efforts largely through subtle diplomatic pressure and encouragement. Drawing on his early experiences in the pueblo – experiences that he had previously repudiated because of their apparent parochialism – he recognises that he is able to help most not by judgementally surveying the situation and attempting to impose a quick-fix rational solution, but by patiently familiarising himself with the pattern of local custom so that he might play a supportive part in its gradual reconstruction. In his own words, '[y]ou can't change anything from outside it. Standing apart, looking down, taking the overview, you see the pattern. What's wrong, what's missing. You want to fix it. But you can't patch it. You have to be in it, weaving it. You have to be part of the weaving' (ibid.: 157). And with this wisdom comes fulfilment. By the end of the story, which takes place many years in the future, Havzhiva has at last attained a measure of personal equilibrium. Just as Teyeo and Solly achieve a balance in their relationship between sitting still and flying, so too, by means of his unassuming political

activity on behalf of the women of Yotebber, Havzhiva achieves a balance in his own person between the static values of the pueblo and the dynamic values of the historians.

'A Woman's Liberation'

The subject of Le Guin's second revolutionary portrait is even more improbable than the first. Her features are also much more fully and lovingly drawn. Indeed, it is fair to say that interesting and engaging as are all the protagonists in *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, one of them stands out above the rest for the sheer beauty and emotional resonance of her tale. Rakam, the only character in the collection accorded the respectful freedom to narrate her own life tale without the intervention of an omniscient narrator, is without a doubt the most fully developed and hauntingly memorable of Le Guin's creations in her four-part story suite.

Born a slave on the planet Werel, Rakam spends her early childhood confined in a gender-segregated slave compound owned by the wealthy and politically influential Shomeke family. Unlike the other light-skinned servants in the compound, however, Rakam is dark, similar in colour to the members of the Werelian ruling class. Although she isn't aware of the fact at the time, the reason for her unusual pigmentation is that she is the product of an exploitative sexual encounter between her lighter-skinned, asset (slave)-class mother and the dark-skinned owner of the slave compound.

Precisely because she represents a mixture of what Werelian class institutions are designed to separate, Rakam suffers at the hands of both the owners and her fellow assets. When she is a young child, older asset children taunt her by calling her 'Blackie' and 'Bossie'. Matters only get worse when, thanks to the intervention of her mother, Rakam is admitted to the Great House of the Shomeke family as a personal servant to the master's wife, Lady Tazeu Shomeke. While she is thus spared the tragic fate of those condemned to work long hours in the compound fields, she is obliged instead to become the sexual plaything of Lady Tazeu. To her credit, Le Guin describes these events with great sensitivity and care, and in such an artful manner that we are able to empathise with Rakam's plight. Because Le Guin allows her creation the freedom to tell her own tale, Rakam's mixture of fear and reverent awe is palpable when she is first introduced to Lady Tazeu. We also understand her vulnerability, and while it quickly becomes apparent that Lady Tazeu is a victim of sorts as well – like other women of wealthy or distinguished Werelian families she is regarded as the property of her husband and confined indoors – there is no doubt that the sexual relationship that develops between them is an exploitative one. As Rakam explains,

I became the pet of Lady Tazeu Wehoma Shomeke. I slept with her almost every night. Her husband was seldom home and when he was there did not come to her, preferring bondswomen for his pleasure. Sometimes she had my mother or other, younger bondswomen come into her bed, and she sent me away at those times, until I was older, ten or eleven, when she began to keep me and have me join in with them, teaching me how to be pleasured. She was gentle, but she was the mistress in love, and I was her instrument which she played.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 173)

During these years Rakam seldom returns to the slave compound. When she does the children she used to play with reject her. In order to cope psychologically with this rejection, Rakam internalises the values of the race-based Werelian class system and identifies with the master class whose company she so intimately keeps.

Her first inkling that it is possible to live a life based on a very different set of values comes when Lady Tazeu presents Rakam as a gift to her son Erod on the occasion of his seventeenth birthday. A sensitive, bookish and idealistic young man who hates his father and all that he stands for, Erod does not take sexual advantage of Rakam. Instead he talks to her endlessly about the idea of revolution. Rakam is understandably sceptical:

I had no idea what a revolution was. When Erod told me that it meant that assets on plantations in this place called Yeowe were fighting their owners, I did not understand how assets could do that. From the beginning it was ordained that there should be higher and lower beings, the Lord and the human, the man and the woman, the owner and the owned. All my world was Shomeke Estate and it stood on that one foundation. Who would want to overturn it? Everyone would be crushed in the ruins.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 178)

Her scepticism changes to excited anticipation when Erod's father dies and the son exercises his rights of inheritance by choosing to free all the slaves. But the excitement is short lived. Impatient to get away from the scene of his misery and begin a new life in the city working for freedom, Erod fails to ensure the safety of his charges. As soon as he and his staff depart, the

owners of neighbouring estates move in and violently re-enslave the newly freed assets. Rakam's grandmother is shot, while Rakam herself is forcibly removed to the Zeskra Estate, where the owners and their guests exploit her as a sexual slave.

As a result of these experiences[8] Rakam develops very distinctive and emphatic views about love and revolution. She associates the former with sexual exploitation, and when she succeeds in escaping from Zeskra to the city she attempts to cut it out of her life altogether. In her own words,

I was angry now at every man who looked at me as men look at women. I was angry at women who looked at me seeing me sexually ... I hated the sexual parts of myself, my genitals and breasts and the swell of my hips and belly. Ever since I was a child, I had been dressed in soft clothing made to display all that sexuality of a woman's body. When I began to be paid and could buy or make my own clothing, I dressed in hard, heavy cloth.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 194)

She associates revolution with mindless violence, promises betrayed and the replacement of one ruling class by another, and so when she begins her new life as a manumitted asset she embarks on a very personal quest to discover alternative paths to liberation.

Like Havzhiva, Rakam devotes herself with particular zeal to the study of history, which she too regards as a means of escaping from the slavery of the present. Whereas at Shomeke and Zeskra there was nothing but the way things were, since nobody knew anything about a time when things had been different, in her history books Rakam discovers evidence that rebellion is possible. She also learns that in history any freedom has been made by those who are subject to exploitative forms of power, not given by those who wield it. One of the triumphs of the narrative is that it enables us to see and feel just how difficult this learning process is for Rakam. We discover, for example, that she must contend with the practical motivational difficulties involved in studying after a hard day's work: 'It was hard work. Reading is hard for a grown person to learn, tired, at night, after work all day. It is much easier to let the net take one's mind over' (ibid.: 200). Even more dauntingly, she must deal with opposition from her fellow revolutionaries, who criticise her for selfishly pursuing her studies (and, later, her public lecturing and publishing) at the expense of the revolutionary struggle. Rakam responds forcefully and persuasively that she wishes to bring liberating knowledge to those who need it most. 'Everything I do is for freedom', she exclaims in a wounding argument with her friend Ahas; 'I don't put myself first – politicians and capitalists do that. I put freedom first' (ibid.: 201–2). Privately, however, she feels guilty for reading while others are engaged in the more mundane, day-to-day work of making a revolution. She also acknowledges with an admirable degree of critical self-awareness that she is not always as attuned as she might be to the political exigencies of the struggle.

Rakam's fiercest clash with her fellow revolutionaries occurs in the context of a debate about the role of women in the struggle. Erod, now 'Lord' Erod, argues at one of the revolutionary meetings that private affections must be overridden by loyalty to the cause of liberty, and that any personal issue must take second place to the primary issue of legal emancipation. Rakam responds that there is no freedom without sexual freedom. When Erod insists in reply that men must bear the responsibility for the public side of life and women the responsibility for the domestic side of life, Rakam offers the following passionate and persuasive rejoinder: 'Then will emancipation for a woman mean she's free to enter the beza, be locked in on the women's side [of the house]? ... what is freedom for a woman? Is it different from freedom for a man? Or is the free person free?' (ibid.: 204). In thus speaking from the heart, much as Shevek does before a much larger gathering of revolutionaries in chapter 9 of *The Dispossessed*, Rakam finds her own distinctive revolutionary voice and inspires other asset women to do the same.

She develops this distinctive revolutionary voice further when, thanks to the intervention of Old Music and (we may surmise) Rega Teyeo, she succeeds in eluding imminent arrest by going into exile on the ostensibly free world of Yeowe. There she discovers to her horror, as Havzhiva did in 'A Man of the People', that gender hierarchies are even more deeply entrenched on Yeowe than they are on the slave world of Werel. In many ways, her experiences on Yeowe directly mirror her earlier experiences on Werel. For example, she is initially confined with other female refugees in a gender-segregated agricultural village, from which she must flee to escape to the relative freedom of the city. However, whereas on Werel she lacked the education, imagination, and practical communication and organisational skills necessary to resist her oppressors, on Yeowe she quickly becomes a leader of the resistance.

Like Dr Yeron, whom she eventually befriends, she conceives emancipation as a long-term process consisting largely of patient educational work designed to counteract the lingering Yeowen slave mentality. She acts on these convictions in the agricultural village by teaching illiterate women and children to read. Later, she shares her knowledge of history with the women in order to mobilise them to demand from the men their earned share of the proceeds of communal labour. In the city she teaches at a school staffed by men and women who 'believed with a fierce passion that only education would lead to freedom' (ibid.: 221). She also joins an educational society composed of democrats, mostly teachers, working to counteract hierarchical thinking in all spheres of life. Very interestingly, the men in the group are in general gradualists, while the women are ready for revolution, thus confirming a pattern in the story suggesting a connection between sexual oppression and social radicalism.

Having travelled such a great physical, intellectual and psychological distance in pursuit of her revolutionary freedom dreams,[9] it is hardly surprising that Rakam experiences crises of self-doubt. Perhaps the most debilitating of these is precipitated by her fear that all her educational efforts will come to naught as a result of governmental control of the influential non-print media. 'Against that', she wonders,

what harm could a lot of teachers do? Parents who had no schooling had children who entered the net to hear and see and feel what the Chief wanted them to know: that freedom is obedience to leaders, that virtue is violence, that manhood is domination. Against the enactment of such truths in daily life and in the heightened sensational experience of the neareals, what good were words?

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 222)

Help arrives fortuitously in the form of the Sub-Envoy of the Ekumen to the Yotebber Region, an alien named Yehedarhed Havzhiva. Sent by Old Music to return the books that Rakam had left behind on Werel in her haste to depart for Yeowe, Havzhiva does far more than that. He also helps to restore Rakam's confidence in her educational mission by reinforcing her waning faith in the freedom-giving power of words.

It is perhaps more accurate to say that they reinforce each other's faith in the freedom-giving power of the written word. And this common love of books facilitates a different sort of love between them, one that grows stronger and deeper as they work together to help organise a great demonstration of women. At the very end of the story the two embrace and make love, and we feel that something very profound has occurred, something that may well shake the foundations of society. For their love for one another is not simply a private affair. It is also a repudiation of the system of class, race, gender and sexuality-based domination that enslaved Rakam and inflicted on her a lifetime of sexual servitude and denial. In helping her to overcome her deepest fear, it strikes to the heart of a system that thrives above all on the propagation of terror. Rakam herself half-recognises this point when she recoils at Havzhiva's suggestion that she come home with him:

'Don't make me laugh!' I said, and began crying. I wept all the way back along the levee. I sobbed and thought the sobs were ceasing and then sobbed again. I cried for all my sorrows, all my shames. I cried because they were with me now and always would be. I cried because the gate was open and I could go through at last, go into the country on the other side, but I was afraid to go.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 233)

Having overcome this fear, Rakam gains the confidence and strength necessary to conquer other fears as well. Among other things she joins the faculty of the University of Yeowe as a teacher of history, assumes the editorship of the University Press and writes the story of her life. The final lines of that story may be interpreted as a fitting counterpoint to Teyeo's scepticism about the revolutionary significance of love:

What is one man's and one woman's love and desire, against the history of two worlds, the great revolutions of our lifetimes, the hope, the unending cruelty of our species? A little thing. But a key is a little thing, next to the door it opens. If you lose the key, the door may never be unlocked. It is in our bodies that we lose or begin our freedom, in our bodies that we accept or end our slavery. So I wrote this book for my friend, with whom I have lived and will die free.

(Le Guin 1997 [1995]: 234)

Conclusions

It is now commonly assumed that romantic love and revolution are fundamentally unconnected phenomena. From one such popular perspective, love is a mixture of sexual attraction and day-to-day caring about another person that tends to detach the individuals concerned from wider social circumstances; revolution is a form of governmental change through violence, and the one has nothing to do with the other. In *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, Ursula K. Le Guin

challenges these assumptions. She does so first and foremost by offering us strikingly beautiful portraits of fictional characters enacting very different, and inextricably interrelated, forms of love and revolution. More specifically, she successfully embodies in her narrative forms of loving that nurture creative qualities like individual growth and transformation, and forms of non-violent social revolution both driven by and conducive to such life-affirming and fundamentally constructive expressions of the human spirit.

In the first two stories of the collection Le Guin explores the relationship between love and revolution by considering the transformative potential of love. In both of these stories, the two main characters are strong willed and very different individuals brought together by unexpected circumstances that help to generate an impulse to mutual aid. Initially they each maintain rigid personal boundaries that the other dares not cross. Pride and stubborn self-control create insurmountable obstacles to intimacy, and each treats the other as an object. Over time, however, honest communication encourages a newfound respect for the independent personality and views of the other. This mutual respect in turn opens the way to genuine intimacy, and facilitates a process of loving, mutual redefinition in which both individuals change and grow together. In contrast to the fearful and self-absorbed love of the young couple Wada and Eyid, the committed love that develops between Yoss and Abberkam, and between Solly and Teyeo, cultivates a mature and considered sensitivity to the suffering of others. In the case of Solly and Teyeo, it also leads to prominent and constructive non-violent action on behalf of revolutionary social change.

In the last two stories of the collection, Le Guin explores the relationship between love and revolution by inquiring into the nature of social revolution. True to her anarchist, Taoist and pacifist convictions, she challenges traditional power-centred understanding of revolutions by portraying in vivid fictional detail a radically different type of revolutionary movement – one concerned not with the violent seizure of political power, but with the liberation of imagination, desire and human creative potential in everyday life. Very much in the spirit of the non-violent anarchist revolutionary tradition, the imaginative vision represented is one of a patient, constructive, organic and open-ended form of revolutionary practice ultimately rooted in a transformation of the individual spirit. Hence the human-scale focus of the stories, and their depiction of revolutionary lives very different from those of the great military leaders or ideologues who typically take centre stage in both fictional and non-fictional accounts of revolution. In 'A Man of the People', the revolutionary portrait is of an unassuming man born in a simple pueblo village who achieves wisdom and balance in his life not by dominating his environment, but by patiently familiarising himself with the pattern of local custom so that he might play a supportive role in its gradual reconstruction. In 'A Woman's Liberation', it is of a remarkable woman who overcomes slavery, sexual abuse and the wounding criticisms of fellow revolutionaries to become a leader in the non-violent struggle for women's liberation. In both stories, the main characters are portrayed not as larger-than-life figures free of all imperfections, but as flawed human beings beset by ambivalence, conflict and self-doubt – individuals who must ultimately acknowledge they need the love and support of others in order to carry on.

Perhaps the closest contemporary analogues to this way of thinking about love and revolution may be found in the anarchistic, non-fictional writings of bell hooks and George Lakey. In *All About Love: New Visions*, the former adopts M. Scott Peck's definition of love as the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.[10] It follows, she argues, that love and abuse, or domination, cannot coexist. The exercise of dominating power gives one the illusion of having triumphed over fear, over the need to love. In fact, however, it leads only to alienation and separation. When we love, hooks suggests, we no longer allow our hearts to be held captive by fear. We surrender the will to domination,[11] and open ourselves to the possibility of growth and transformation through connection with another. Insofar as such loving practice is an active and creative force based on respect for difference, responsibility and sensitivity to the suffering of others, it should lead us into greater communion with the world, and the recognition that all spheres of life could and should have as their foundation a universal love ethic. hooks acknowledges the fact that most people today are deeply sceptical about the idea of love serving as such a transformative social force. But she quite rightly replies that one need only recall the words of Martin Luther King, and the

relatively recent experience of the American civil rights movement, to see that loving practice is about far more than simply giving an individual greater life satisfaction.[12] It is also an essential element in the struggle to construct humane alternatives to fear-based structures of domination and oppression.

Like hooks, George Lakey makes the observation that as each of us replaces despair with love we move our world a bit closer to a living revolution. In his book *Powerful Peacemaking: A Strategy for a Living Revolution* (Lakey 1987), he refutes the antiquated belief that successful revolutionary change necessarily entails a sudden violent action to remake society, and proposes instead a developmental model of revolutionary movement that grows organically over time, with each successive stage building on the preceding one. More specifically, he identifies five core stages of what he calls a 'living revolution': cultural preparation, organisation building, propaganda of the deed, mass economic and political noncooperation, and parallel institutions. Like the German anarchist thinker Gustav Landauer – who observed that the state is 'a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behaviour between them; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another' and emphasised the role of 'love' rather than violence in revolutionary change (Landauer, quoted in Marshall 1993:411–12)[13] – Lakey recognises that meaningful social change is ultimately rooted in a loving transformation of the individual spirit. Being an eminently practical thinker, he also understands that only a strong and united people's organisation with a revolutionary programme can provide the new life that becomes the new society. Building such an organisation is hard work, involving not only social analysis and critique, but also self-awareness, self-education and the continuing creative imagination of both revolutionary goals and strategy (I would add love to this list as well). Nobody can give such skills to us. Only through popular struggle can the people gain a freedom they can keep. Governments will, of course, do everything in their power to stymie this process, not least by fomenting violence in order to discredit the revolutionary movement and justify repression. But, as Lakey accurately observes in terms that will be familiar to students of anarchist thought (see, for example, Étienne de la Boétie's classic work on the subject, *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, frequently translated into English as *Of Voluntary Servitude*),

It is discouraging to see the impressive apparatus of repression belonging to the state, but the fact remains that the state cannot continue without the cooperation of the people. In the metaphor of a house, the foundation is the people's consent, and no matter how impressive the roof of army, police, or secret files, if the foundation gives way, the house will fall.

(Lakey 1987:55)

Very interestingly, both hooks and Lakey reserve some of their harshest criticisms for the destructive effects of patriarchal masculinity. hooks observes that in patriarchal societies men, more so than women, use lying and psychological terrorism as a means of gaining power in heterosexual relationships. Many women are complicit in these lies because they wish to be able to project onto men a fantasy image of ideal masculine strength and power. The tragic but inevitable consequence of such control-oriented deceptions is the loss of the capacity to give and receive love, because 'it is impossible to nurture one's own or another's spiritual growth when the core of one's being and identity is shrouded in secrecy and lies' (hooks 2000:46).

Lakey too is scathing in his criticism of patriarchal masculinity, but, in contrast to hooks, focuses primarily on its social implications, and in particular on the ways in which it helps to reinforce destructive institutions such as the war system. Sexuality, we are taught by our patriarchal culture, is about domination: 'fucking', for example, means both sexual intercourse and exploitation. Men are meant to be sexually dominating. Women and gay men are perceived to be sexually subordinate. Hence men must prove that they are neither effeminate nor gay by expressing dominance. Violence, and the elaborate war system it maintains, is one way of doing so. The living revolutionary alternative, Lakey suggests, would entail equality of sexes and sexual orientations, and the abandonment of polarised sex roles.

As the four tales in Le Guin's story suite make abundantly clear, any such love-inspired, transformative social project would benefit greatly from sustained reflection on the complex historical legacy of slave societies and their mutually reinforcing systems of class, race, gender and sexuality-based oppression. In this and many other respects, the work of black feminist writers such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler and June Jordan is

invaluable. Drawing on this work, the sociologist Patricia Hill Collins notes that systems of oppression frequently sustain themselves by harnessing the power of deep feelings like love and the erotic to the exigencies of domination. This is so, she contends, in the cases of both contemporary capitalism and historical slave societies (Hill Collins 2009:162–3). I agree, and would cite as particularly compelling historical evidence of the latter the sexual economy of slavery in the United States in the nineteenth century that systematically expropriated black women's sexuality and reproductive capacity for the pleasure and profit of white slave-owners. Specifically, not only were enslaved women the only segment of antebellum (pre-Civil War) society compelled to labour both in the fields and in the gender-segregated domestic sphere, they were also the only group forced to perform sexual and reproductive labour to satisfy the economic, political and personal interests of elite-class white men. In economic terms, the reproductive labour performed by enslaved black women in the United States was – in contrast to other slave societies in Latin America and the Caribbean, which replenished themselves primarily by means of constant influxes of new slaves from Africa – arguably the most valuable labour performed in the entire economy (Davis 2009:221). Hence the legal rules and precedents that treated them as livestock, and stipulated that the race of the father did not alter the status of an enslaved black woman's child. Even more barbarously, as a direct result of such laws 'tens of thousands of white men were able to sexually abuse and coerce individual enslaved women without the risk that the women would bear children whose legal status would be affected in any way by their own' (ibid.: 224). Members of an enslaved workforce, black women were expected to provide sex on demand, and the resulting abuse was by no means limited to coercive sexual relations with their white masters. Slave-owners frequently compelled their slaves to 'initiate' a son or younger nephew, or pleasure a family friend, and in many cases they sold those deemed to be the most attractive (the so-called 'fancy girls', usually of lighter skin complexion) for a hefty profit. In these ways the slave system worked to thwart and manipulate the erotic power within the culture of an oppressed group that could have provided energy for social change. One of the many destructive legacies of this exercise of power as domination may be seen in the complex social power dynamics shaping African-American love and desire today, and in particular the stubborn persistence of a form of black masculinity that sometimes blurs the distinction between 'protecting' black women and controlling them (Hill Collins 2009:169–70). Equally, however, the creative legacy of resistance to slavery has inspired the black feminist tradition and its powerful and inspirational efforts to reclaim love and the erotic as a catalyst for emancipatory social change.

Were any of the major characters in *Four Ways to Forgiveness* to read some of the analyses of love and revolution referred to above, they would no doubt find much food for thought useful to them in understanding, and acting rightly in, their own warring and divided worlds. We, the readers of Le Guin's science fiction story suite, are in a slightly different position, for her work treats ideas only insofar as they are embodied in the lives of the characters that populate her fictional narrative. Still, we may perhaps emerge from our imaginative engagements with the lives of these characters with very different perspectives on both our own individual lives and the possibilities for organised collective resistance to structures of domination. In the current climate of state-sponsored fear and terror that suffocates hope and silences expressions of human solidarity, images of a very different way of being such as are to be found in the pages of *Four Ways to Forgiveness* are sustenance for the hungry spirit. They remind us of the generous and inclusive freedom dreams historically articulated with particular poignancy by black women artists and freedom fighters, now all but forgotten in a world where dreams and desires of every shade and colour have been commodified and colonised in the service of capital and the state. By helping us to see beyond the tyranny of the present, Le Guin has, in effect, opened the gate to another and far better world. It remains to be seen whether we will have the courage to step through.

Notes

1 My thanks to Peter Stillman and Jamie Heckert for their supportive comments on an earlier draft of this essay, and to Martha Ackelsberg and Richard Cleminson for their helpful advice regarding the gender and sexual politics of the Spanish anarchists.

2 I try to give a flavour of the richness of this anarchist counterculture in the United States' context in which Bookchin and

Le Guin were writing in my recent journal article 'Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unhelpful Dichotomy' (Davis 2010). For detailed accounts, see Avrich (2005, 1980), Blechman (1994), Falk (1984), Farrell (1997), Koenig (2009), Marshall (1993), Ording (2009), Roszak (1995), Sonn (1992) and Veysey (1973).

3 To question or challenge the dichotomous and highly gendered ways in which public and private have so frequently been defined in Western civilisation does not, of course, necessarily entail rejecting the distinction between them altogether. Although my views on the subject are by no means fixed, I am currently inclined to agree with Peter Steinberger (1999) that it is helpful to distinguish between the thesis of identity (the idea that there is no real difference between public and private) and the thesis of inseparability (the idea that although public and private denote different ways of being or manners of acting in the world, they are nonetheless always and importantly connected). Whereas the former may entail jettisoning the idea of privacy altogether, along with the shelter it sometimes provides for freedom and intimacy within community, the latter enables one to criticise the idea of a separate and distinct sphere of privacy while still retaining a vocabulary in which it is possible to defend private activity against the coercive force of public opinion.

4 See on this point Richard Cleminson's piece 'Male Inverts and Homosexuals: Sex Discourse in the Anarchist *Revista Blanca*' (Cleminson 1995b). Lesbianism was discussed in the Spanish anarchist press as well, but to a lesser degree than male homosexuality. The principal work that discusses both of these issues is Cleminson's *Anarquismo y homosexualidad: Antología de artículos de la Revista Blanca, Generación Consciente, Estudios e Iniciales (1924–1935)* (Cleminson 1995a). See also Martha Ackelsberg's pioneering study of the revolutionary anarchist women's organisation Mujeres Libres, *Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women* (Ackelsberg 2005 [1991]). In both this work (Ackelsberg 2005:172) and a subsequent journal article (Ackelsberg 2000) she observes that while it was well known within Mujeres Libres circles that one of the co-initiators of the group was a lesbian who lived openly with her female partner, there is no written material from the period even acknowledging their relationship, let alone discussing and/or defending it.

5 In 1995, the second story in the collection ('Forgiveness Day') won the Asimov's Readers' Award, the Locus Readers' Award, and the Theodore Sturgeon Award. In 1996, the collection as a whole won the Locus Readers' Award. In spite of this well-deserved recognition, *Four Ways to Forgiveness* has been almost entirely neglected by scholarly critics. My research searches have uncovered a smattering of references or excerpts in science fiction anthologies and obscure journal articles, as well as brief book reviews largely confined to plot summaries, but not much else. One might reasonably expect that anarchist scholarship would prove an exception to the general rule given the strong, if subtle, anarchist influences on the story. However, this supposition is not at present supported by the evidence of publication.

6 The term is Le Guin's. She explains its *raison d'être* as follows in the foreword to her collection of stories *The Birthday of the World*:

My book *Four Ways to Forgiveness* consists of four connected stories. Once more I plead for a name, and thus recognition, for this fictional form (which goes back at least as far as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* and has become increasingly frequent and interesting): a book of stories linked by place, characters, theme, and movement, so as to form not a novel but a whole. There's a sneering British term 'fix-up' for books by authors who, told that collections 'don't sell', patch unconnected stories together with verbal duct tape. But the real thing is not a random collection, any more than a Bach cello suite is. It does things a novel doesn't do. It is a real form, and deserves a real name. Maybe we could call it a story suite? I think I will.

(Le Guin 2002: xi–xii)

Readers may be interested to know *The Birthday of the World* includes a fifth contribution to the original four-story suite. The title of the sequel story is 'Old Music and the Slave Women'. It is much darker than the other four, and is perhaps motivated in part by Le Guin's indignation at the presumption, especially common in science fiction, that slaves who do not revolt against their oppressors are either contemptible or of no consequence. See her essay 'A War without End' (Le Guin 2004) for further discussion of this particular point.

7 My use of these terms is deliberate, and influenced in part by Harold Barclay's helpful discussion of forms of power in his 'Power: Some Anthropological Perspectives' (Barclay 2005). Like Barclay, I believe that power is best understood as a continuum, at one end of which is domination and at the other the exertion of influence without domination. My criticisms of 'power' in this essay are directed at its dominating, destructive forms.

8 It is perhaps worth emphasising the point that such experiences are still all too common in the non-fictional world of our Earth. The difference, of course, is that our ruling classes are usually *lighter* in skin colour than our subordinate classes. By deliberately reversing this colour-status connection in her fiction, Le Guin challenges her readers to reflect on the completely illogical nature of racial discrimination. She thus helps to plant the seeds of a radically different way of seeing and living.

9 I borrow this expression from the title of Robin Kelley's passionately argued book, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Kelley 2002).

10 hooks acknowledges that many people appear to be uncomfortable with the emphasis on spirituality in Peck's definition of love:

Some folks have difficulty with Peck's definition of love because he uses the word 'spiritual'. He is referring to that dimension of our core reality where mind, body, and spirit are one. An individual does not need to be a believer in religion to embrace the idea that there is an animating principle in the self – a life force (some of us call it soul) that when nurtured enhances our capacity to be more fully self-actualized and able to engage in communication with the world around us.

(hooks 2000:13)

11 hooks tends at times to idealise and over-domesticate love. Whereas she appears to associate love with total and complete liberation from fear and the will to domination, I understand it as an ongoing emotional process integrally associated with everyday fears, pain, problems, uncertainties, dangers and complexities. Robert Solomon's criticisms of Fromm and Peck, both of whose theories heavily influence hooks' conception of love, are helpful as a corrective to this particular tendency:

The vulgar reduction of love invites an equally vulgar inflation of love, and so we get those heaps of extravagant praise without a hint of danger, as if love were always good and not sometimes stupid, even fatal, as if the virtues of love were 'sweetness' and calm rather than exhilaration and violence of the soul. It is all well and good and perhaps even poetic to call love 'divine' and 'the answer', but as love becomes more abstract and idealized, it loses touch with the realities of passion and our everyday fears, desires, hopes and expectations.

(Solomon 2006:23)

12 hooks is more critical of the example of Martin Luther King in the final chapter of her book *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (hooks 1994). As in *All About Love: New Visions* (hooks 2000), she argues in the earlier work that without love all our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed. More specifically, she suggests that without an ethic of love shaping the direction of our political visions and radical aspirations, we tend to move against domination only when we feel our self-interest directly threatened. She praises King for recognising this point, but also criticises him for advocating a reformist rather than a revolutionary love ethic. According to hooks, King's continued reformism in the face of stubborn and frequently violent white resistance to the civil rights movement opened the door to the Black Power movement and its emphasis on power rather than love: 'While King had focused on loving our enemies, Malcolm called us back to ourselves, acknowledging that taking care of blackness was our central responsibility. Even though King talked about the importance of black self-love, he talked more about loving our enemies' (hooks 1994:244). hooks' sympathetic criticisms of King are thought provoking, and consistent with her persuasive later claim in *All About Love* that self-love is the foundation of loving practice.

13 Of course, one might also argue that in certain circumstances the use of violent force could be understood as an expression of love. The French anarchist Elisée Reclus defended such a position, and explained its rationale as follows: 'I see a cat that is tortured, a child that is beaten, a woman who is mistreated, and if I am strong enough to prevent it, I prevent it' (Reclus, quoted in Marshall 1993:343). I take no definitive position in this essay on the question of whether some forms of (non-consensual) violence may be compatible with love, and instead refer the reader to the Raymond Carver short story cited on p. 103, in which the characters discuss and debate precisely this issue in its most intimate form.

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Chapter 7

Structures of desire

Postanarchist kink in the speculative fiction of Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany

Lewis Call

It's a beautiful universe … wondrous and the more exciting because no one has written plays and poems and built sculptures to indicate the structure of desire I negotiate every day as I move about in it.

—Samuel Delany, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*

The problem of power is one of the major philosophical and political preoccupations of the modern West. It is a problem which has drawn the attention of some of the greatest minds of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. I have argued elsewhere that the philosophies of power articulated by Nietzsche and Foucault stand as prototypes of an innovative form of anarchist theory, one which finds liberatory potential in the disintegration of the modern self and its liberal humanist politics (Call 2002: chs 1 and 2). Lately this kind of theory has become known as *postanarchism*. For me, postanarchism refers to a form of contemporary anarchist theory which draws extensively upon postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy in order to push anarchism beyond its traditional boundaries. Postanarchism tries to do this by adding important new ideas to anarchism's traditional critiques of statism and capitalism. Two of these ideas are especially significant for the present essay: the Foucauldian philosophy of power, which sees power as omnipresent but allows us to distinguish between power's various forms, and the Lacanian concept of subjectivity, which understands the self to be constituted by and through its desire. Postanarchism implies and includes a crucial sexual anarchism. Indeed, the disruption of conventional forms of sexual identity is one of the most powerful moves available to the postanarchist. When postanarchism's anti-essentialist critique is applied to sexuality, the result is queer. When that critique is applied to power, the result is kinky. Postanarchism enables a system of erotic ethics suitable for an age beyond humanism. That system endorses radical relations of erotic power up to and including consensual play-slavery. This dramatic form of erotic power exchange mimics the structure of slavery, but in a way which produces radically different subjective meaning for the participants: unlike slavery, play-slavery can be ethical and erotic. Postanarchism suggests that ethical structures of erotic power (including those of play-slavery) may actually sap the authority of their non-consensual *Doppelgänger*s. I have used the term 'kink theory' to describe the body of work which explores the ethical possibilities of consensual erotic power exchange (Call 2007). I now wish to argue that when kink theory encounters postanarchism, the result is something new and interesting: an ethical position and a strategy for political action, which I propose to call postanarchist kink.

This essay examines elements of postanarchist kink in the speculative fiction of two African American authors, Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany.[1] The work of Butler and Delany is centrally concerned with the political and ethical problems of slavery. These two authors provide what amounts to a traditional anarchist critique of the historical American slave system. However, their work also endorses erotic power exchange, including forms which seem to replicate the structures of slavery. Their remarkable novels suggest that an erotic play-slavery based upon consent and mutual desire may help us overcome the crippling legacy of chattel slavery. In their most radical moments, Butler and Delany demonstrate that erotic power exchange can facilitate a breakdown of the traditional political subject; furthermore, they show that this breakdown is potentially liberating. As Sherryl Vint has recently observed, Butler and Delany are 'authors whose critical engagement with questions of sexuality and power pushes the boundaries of the current social configuration' (Vint 2009:402). The novels of Butler and Delany suggest, counterintuitively but convincingly, that one way out of capitalist political economy may lead through the S/M dungeon: a kinky postanarchism.

The body of theory which I call postanarchist kink was born in the 1980s, alongside queer theory. In 1984, *The Advocate* published a groundbreaking interview with Michel Foucault entitled 'Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity'. Foucault emphasised the anarchist aspects of

queer politics: 'being homosexuals, we are in a struggle with the government, and the government is in a struggle with us' (Foucault 1984:167). This bold, oppositional stance would become one of the defining features of queer theory, and Foucault's crucial contributions to that body of theory are well known. Yet Foucault's work supports more than one radical theory about sexuality. Even as he helped to create queer theory, he simultaneously contributed to a related critical discourse, which I have been calling kink theory. The latter discourse studies the set of practices known collectively as BDSM: bondage/discipline (B/D), dominance/submission (D/S) and sadomasochism (S/M). Through its study of these practices, kink theory attempts to theorise the consensual exchange of erotic power. Kink theory interprets such power exchange as a viable ethical alternative to the non-consensual power structures which permeate the modern world. 'What strikes me with regard to S&M', said Foucault, 'is how it differs from social power' (ibid.: 169). Foucault argued that social power 'is a strategic relation which has been stabilized through institutions', while S&M 'is a strategic relation, but it is always fluid' (ibid.). For Foucault, kink was important because it showed that even in a world where power is omnipresent, *some* of that power flows in accordance with an ethics of freedom. Anarchists should be very interested in the possibility that this ethical, erotic power might be deployed as a symbolic challenge to the forms of social, economic and political power against which they struggle.

Certainly the modern liberal state has taken a strong interest in kink. Foucault's fellow kink theorist Gayle Rubin noted that the state goes to great lengths to delegitimise S/M in particular, largely by asserting that those who practice S/M are 'legally incapable of consenting' to such practices (Rubin 1984:305).[2] So the state tries to contest S/M on precisely the same theoretical terrain where anarchism attacks the legitimacy of that state: the terrain surrounding the concept of consent. This struggle over the meaning of consent suggests that consent means one thing to the state and something very different to anarchists and kinksters. Wendy Brown has argued compellingly that within liberalism consent marks the presence of a power to which one submits (Brown 1995:162–3). Thus the liberal form of consent actually 'marks the subordinate status of the consenting party' (ibid.: 163). Clearly, liberal consent could not provide the basis for ethical power relations, since this kind of consent requires and presumes radical inequalities between the parties. In the liberal model, an immensely powerful entity (the state) seeks consent from those who possess little if any power (political subjects, or citizens). Thus, as Brown argues, liberal consent is 'a response to power – it adds or withdraws legitimacy – but is not a mode of enacting or sharing in power' (ibid.).

Here we may draw a sharp line between liberal consent and the kind of consent which enables relations of erotic power exchange. The structures of erotic consent are deeply informed by desire, particularly embodied desire. This is rarely, if ever, the case with the structures of political consent which enable modern liberal states, or with the forms of economic consent which underwrite modern capitalism. The consent of the liberal political subject or the capitalist economic subject can be grudging, in different or apathetic. Relations of erotic power, by the same token, require desire. Mutual desire guarantees the ethical content of erotic power exchange, for desire ensures that the needs and wishes of the 'subordinate party' will be taken fully into account. In Lacan's famous general formulation, '*man's desire is the desire of the Other*' (Lacan 1981:38). Kinky relations provide a particularly striking example of this. In a typical BDSM relationship, the dominant desires the desire of the submissive. The submissive's desire frequently structures negotiations and determines the shape and extent of the scene. By endorsing and emphasising the desire of the submissive, BDSM promotes a high level of equality between the participants. This equality may sometimes lie hidden behind the *apparent* inequality generated by the BDSM roles themselves, and confusion around this issue may motivate many moral critiques of kink (Highleyman 1997: para. 10). A form of consent which promotes such equality, and which fully respects the desires of all parties involved, could be compatible with anarchism, while the liberal form of consent cannot.

Perhaps the practices of kinksters, and the concept of desiring consent which stands behind those practices, represent a real challenge to the modern state and its political theories. Some anarchists have already begun to recognise this possibility. A 2002 issue of *Organise!*, the magazine of Britain's Anarchist Federation, called for 'safe, free, diverse and consensual' sex.

The magazine ran an 'Interview with an Anarchist Dominatrix', one Mistress Venus. Mistress Venus clearly understands how to wield symbolic power against the dominant order. She defines the domination session as an 'escape from reality' (Anarchist Federation 2002:8). But this does not appear to be a nihilistic 'escape' into non-reality. Rather, it looks very much like an attempt to critique the symbolic order of modern capitalism. Mistress Venus does this by developing an alternative symbolic order, one in which symbols of power are redeployed in subversive ways. If this strategy is successful, these redeployed symbols may challenge or undermine the authority of the conventional symbolic order. Mistress Venus suggests that

the roles we play mirror the power-based capitalistic society we live in today, a society of greed, oppression and subversion, a society of force, silence and pain. This is in no way representative of the lifestyle I choose to live in as an anarchist, a society based on equality, respect and self-government. Domination is a game, the adult's version of what children call 'playing'.

(Anarchist Federation 2002:8)[3]

Here Mistress Venus acknowledges the crucial contribution which kink can make to anarchism. As she points out, kink reflects the non-consensual, real world power relations which anarchists universally condemn. Yet this reflection is always consensual, desired and playful. Kink performs real world power relationships in a way which simultaneously critiques those relations and offers a vital ethical alternative. As Liz Highleyman argues, S/M role-playing can be used 'to challenge illegitimate authority. Most SM players believe that such play is a parody of real world authority rather than an imitation of it' (Highleyman 1997: para. 24). The strategy here is to reproduce the structure of real world power relations, but to do so in a way that will radically alter the subjective significance of those relations. The idea, in Highleyman's wonderful formulation, is to 'subvert, pervert, and make overt the erotic subtext of power and authority' (ibid.: para. 27). This has the potential to reduce the psychological power of real world authority, and surely that is a step in the direction of anarchist liberation.

If it is to realise this potential, however, postanarchist kink must be careful not to slip back into a liberal humanist philosophy or politics. Judy Greenway has argued that

even when sexual transgression seems to be about creating new versions of sexuality, the language of the true inner self recurs … Sometimes, for instance in the debates around the limits of consensual sado-masochism, its defenders use the traditional rhetoric of civil liberties, maintaining the public/private distinction.

(Greenway 1997:8)

Indeed, this does represent a serious potential problem for postanarchist kink theory. The risk here is that kinky desire might inadvertently produce a problematic kind of identity politics. This politics would depend for its very existence upon the liberal humanist subject and the liberal state, both of which postanarchism seeks to subvert. Wendy Brown has formulated this problem quite effectively. Her analysis convincingly suggests that identity politics cannot possibly be deployed against the modern state. Brown argues eloquently that 'politicized identities generated out of liberal, disciplinary societies, insofar as they are premised on exclusion from a universal ideal, require that ideal, as well as their exclusion from it, for their own continuing existence as identities' (Brown 1995:65). If Brown is right about this, then a kinky identity politics will be of little use to anarchism.

The source of this problem is desire; more specifically, it is the troubling way in which identity politics seem to channel desire within a liberal order. Thus Brown speaks of 'politicized identity's *desire* within liberal-bureaucratic regimes, its foreclosure of its own freedom' (ibid.: 66). For Brown this is a reactionary desire, one which grows out of a kind of Nietzschean *ressentiment*. Brown emphasises the 'structure of *desire* fueling identity-based political claims' (ibid.: 62). I believe that this term 'structure of desire' (also used by Delany) provides the key that may unlock kink's radical potential. Specifically, I suggest that we must strive to distinguish the reactionary structure of desire which Brown has ably identified from a very different structure of desire. The structure I have in mind would describe the desire of postmodern subjects: deeply embodied, without fixed or stable identities. The identities of these subjects would fluctuate too rapidly and too dramatically for identity politics to emerge. This would also be a structure of kinky desire. As Jamie Heckert has observed, the 'poststructuralist argument on the potential fluidity of the self' suggests that S/M could be used to 'redefine the meaning of power play', though Heckert rightly warns us that this project may not be for everyone, and that it should only be pursued with great care and caution (Heckert 2005:208–9). The concept of fluidity is crucial here: kink has the potential to add flexible, fluid power relations to the fluid identity structures which poststructuralism has identified. 'SM roles are so fluid', observes

Highleyman; '[a]n SM role is not predetermined on the basis of one's occupation, gender, sexual orientation, race, or class, and each partner may take on the role(s) that meet their individual or collective desires' (Highleyman 1997: para. 25). Similarly, Foucault points out that in S/M there are roles, but these can be reversed; even when the roles are stabilised, they are clearly part of a game (Foucault 1984:169).

Certainly many kinksters identify with particular positions within the structure of erotic power relations. Many claim specific identities for themselves, often introducing themselves as tops or bottoms, dominants or submissives, masters or slaves. But many also switch (at least in my experience). Here desire takes priority over specific roles or identities. Within such a structure of desire, identities and power relations are in a constant state of flux. Because the stable subject required by liberal humanism cannot emerge from this structure of desire, I call it postanarchist.

Postanarchist kink sees power not as a problem but as a possibility. Foucault showed us that the attempt to eliminate power is absurd. Rather than attacking power, we might draw careful distinctions between different *kinds* of power. We should entertain the hypothesis that it is, after all, possible to exercise power in an ethically responsible way. Indeed, as Highleyman astutely observes, 'the idea that we can use SM to learn to use power in an ethical way remains, along with consent, the crux of the moral defense of erotic dominance and submission' (Highleyman 1997: para. 38). The key to this ethical possibility is to be found in the philosophy of consent and desire embodied in the practices of erotic power exchange. According to this philosophy, the exchange of power is ethically legitimate if and only if all persons involved consent to that exchange and desire it. These criteria permit erotic power exchange to stand as a dramatic ethical alternative to non-consensual, undesired power.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the crucial differences between these two forms of power, I will examine a body of literature which addresses both forms: the speculative fiction of Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany. These two African American authors are deeply aware of the massive historical traumas which have resulted from the exercise of non-consensual political and economic power, particularly in the American South prior to the Civil War. (As a white male American, I experience these traumas much less directly and in a very different way. As a postanarchist historian, I believe that we can learn from these traumas.) Butler and Delany are especially aware of the problems of sexual exploitation endemic in the American slave system, an awareness they share with other well-known African American authors like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. [4] But Butler and Delany go further than many of their peers, for they not only provide a compelling critique of the political and sexual economies of slavery, they also provide an alternative. For Butler and Delany, erotic power exchange and play-slavery provide an antidote to the ethically bankrupt institution of slavery. These two authors thus offer us a way to begin healing the wounds which chattel slavery has left upon our culture and its philosophy of ethics.

Becoming a kind of master: postanarchist kink in Octavia Butler's *Patternist* books

As an African American woman who writes science fiction, Octavia Butler speaks from a triply marginalised subject position. She is a woman writing in a field which is dominated by male authors. She is an African American writing in a field dominated by white authors. And by choosing to write science fiction, she has elected to participate in a field which is itself marginal to literature – a 'paraliterary' field, to use Delany's terminology. Since this last marginalisation, at least, represents a choice on Butler's part, we must consider the possibility that she *wants* to speak from the margins. Indeed, it is possible that Butler has things to say which can be said *only* at the margins. Butler's work deals with themes of power and slavery – hardly unusual concerns for an African American writer. But by choosing to write science fiction, Butler gives herself the opportunity to approach these themes in a way which is radically different from the approaches of mainstream literature. Certainly we find in Butler a compelling and elegant critique of socio-economic slavery, and of the forms of power which sustain that system. But there is also another kind of power at work in Butler's writing. Lauren J. Lacey argues quite convincingly that 'Butler's last three novels [*Parable of the Sower*, *Parable of the Talents* and *Fledgling*] work through the complexities of power in ways that offer possibilities for

contemporary feminists – and others – to cope with and even to profit from the power formations that surround us' (Lacey 2008:380). While Lacey is right to say that Butler's later novels show us the positive political possibilities of power, this theme is not a new one for Butler. It can also be found in her earliest published work, the *Patternist* series.

Butler quite rightly rejects the sort of power which produced master–slave relations in the antebellum American South. In her *Patternist* series, she describes these relations in terms which will make sense to a largely white science fiction audience who may not be entirely familiar with the political economy of slavery. Butler accomplishes this by locating her slave society in a future world which is ruled by a group of powerful telepaths. These telepaths share access to a grid of mental energy known as the Pattern. The Pattern is strictly hierarchical. This hierarchical structure makes the Pattern a tempting target for anarchist critique, which Butler deploys without naming it as such. The strongest telepath within the Pattern is known as the Patternmaster, and this individual has the ability to exercise non-consensual telepathic control over the other Patternists. The Patternmaster delegates power to Housemasters, who also use their power in a non-consensual way. Butler describes a Housemaster called Coransee as someone who 'radiated power in the way of a man not only confident but arrogant' (Butler 1976:15).

The parallels between these Housemasters and nineteenth-century American plantation owners are unmistakable. Housemasters are in general very competitive, yet they 'had a tradition of returning one another's runaways' (ibid.: 75). Like their real world counterparts, Housemasters recognise that they share a common interest in maintaining the slave system. The Housemasters also reproduce the reprehensible gender relations of the plantation economy. It was, of course, common practice in the American South for slavemasters to rape their female slaves, in order to ensure the reproduction of the slave population. Similarly, Housemaster Coransee knows that 'no woman of his House had the right to refuse him' (ibid.: 158). For women Patternists especially, non-consensual, undesired power is the very essence of the Pattern. And yet these Patternist women yearn for precisely the same kind of power which has traditionally been used against them. 'I want the same thing you want', says a Patternist woman named Amber; 'My House. Mine' (ibid.: 134). One of the most painful truths about non-consensual power is that those who are victimised by such power often respond by dreaming not of a liberated and egalitarian society, but of a world in which that power flows through their hands instead of the hands of their masters. This psychological aspect of the slave system makes it fairly simple to divide the slave population and turn the slaves against one another. Distinctions are drawn in Butler's Houses between the more prestigious household slaves and the lower-ranking 'outsiders'. This closely parallels the distinction between house and field slaves in the antebellum American South. Starved of power, the outsiders often abuse the only people who are below them in the Patternist social hierarchy: those who lack telepathic powers altogether, the 'mutes'. For example, 'there was an outsider who had researched ancient methods of torture and made a hobby of trying them on mutes' (ibid.: 68).

The mutes are clearly an important part of the slave system which the *Patternist* series describes. In the profoundly hierarchical structure of the Pattern, they are the lowest of all groups. Their inequality is largely based upon their lack of telepathic power (which stands in Butler's work as a surrogate for unequal levels of economic power in the American South). But the most honest of Butler's characters understand that this inequality is also linguistic in origin. Consider this conversation between the immortal shape-shifting woman Emma (also known as Anyanwu) and Doro, patriarchal progenitor of the Pattern:

'Mutes!'

He looked annoyed, probably with himself. 'It's a convenient term. People without telepathic voices. Ordinary people.'

'I know what it means, Doro. I knew the first time I heard Mary use it. It means nigger!'

(Butler 1977:161)

Although the Pattern is the result of an extended breeding programme carried out by the immortal Doro, he is, ironically, a mute. However, Doro does have the ability to transfer his mind into another person's body. In doing so, he permanently extinguishes that person's consciousness. Doro has lived for millennia in this way, hopping from one body to another, 'consuming' the minds which inhabit these bodies. Not surprisingly, Doro emerges in Butler's narrative as the ultimate slavemaster. He can kill at will, but he cannot be killed. His power is

absolute and unquestionable. He is also completely unconcerned about the pain of others. 'It was rare for another person's pain to disturb Doro. If the girl seemed to be dying, he would be concerned that good seed was about to be lost. But if she were merely in agony, it did not matter' (Butler 1980:184). Indeed, Doro derives sadistic pleasure from the act of killing, especially when his victim is mentally or telepathically sensitive. Doro explains that he is able to recognise 'the kinds of people that I would get the most pleasure from if I took them. I guess you could say, the kinds of people who tasted best' (Butler 1977:97). Thus Doro is not merely a sadist; he is a kind of psychic cannibal who enjoys consuming the mental energy of his victims. But there is also another motivation for Doro's cruelty: 'Doro wanted an empire. He didn't call it that, but that was what he meant … He needed tools, because an empire of ordinary people wasn't quite what he had in mind' (ibid.: 92–3). Doro's slaves are his tools. He uses them to enhance and increase his political power. Yet there is another form of power which is even more important to Doro. Foucault called it 'bio-power', that which 'brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations' (Foucault 1978:143). Just as a nineteenth-century American slave owner would always be concerned about the size of his 'herd', Doro is obsessed with his breeding programme. 'Had human life ever mattered to Doro beyond his interest in human husbandry?' (Butler 1977:55). In this context, Doro's power is largely biological in origin, since he controls the breeding programme. But again, Butler reminds us that power is always partly linguistic. '*Breed* didn't sound like the kind of word that should be applied to people. The minute he said it, though, I realized it was the right word for what he was doing' (ibid.: 96). Doro's breeding programme is partly enabled by language's reluctance to name it as such. So Butler combines a radical critique of bio-power with an almost structuralist critique of linguistic power: her project has clear Foucauldian affinities.

Like any slavemaster, Doro regards the children born to his 'breeders' not as people but as his property. 'The daughter had been his from the moment of her conception – his property as surely as though his brand were burned into her flesh. She even thought of herself as his property' (Butler 1980:150). Doro's dehumanising breeding project thus exhibits all the worst features of nineteenth-century American slavery.

But, as Foucault reminds us, 'there are no relations of power without resistances' (Foucault 1980:142). The nineteenth century was a time not only of slavery but of slave revolts. In the *Patternist* books, these revolts arrive in the person of Mary, the protagonist of *Mind of My Mind*. Mary is the end result of Doro's breeding programme. It is her telepathic power that establishes the Pattern itself. Her relationship with Doro ranges from tense to antagonistic, and much of this antagonism stems from Mary's resentment of Doro's power:

'What am I for, Doro? What are you progressing toward?'
'You know the answer to that.'
'Your race, your empire, yes, but what place is there in it for me?'

(Butler 1977:101)

As Mary joins with other telepaths to form the Pattern, her power increases dramatically. One of the first to notice this change is Mary's husband Karl, a strong telepath who had once dominated Mary:

'You're changing. I've been watching you change, wondering how far you would go.'
'Changing how?'
'Growing up perhaps. I can remember when it was easier to intimidate you.'

(Butler 1977:188)

Gradually Doro, too, comes to realise that he can no longer control Mary as he once did. Indeed, as a mute, Doro remains shut out of the Pattern. 'Together, the "Patternists" were growing into something that he could observe, hamper, or destroy but not something he could join' (ibid: 155). Naturally, this necessitates a war between Doro and Mary. Doro is immensely powerful, but Mary is more powerful still, for she has the strength of her Patternists to draw upon. Mary does not merely *have* power, 'she *was* power, strength concentrated as Doro had never felt it before – the strength of dozens, perhaps hundreds of Patternists' (ibid.: 217, emphasis added). In the end, even Doro can't stand against such strength. At the conclusion of *Mind of My Mind*, Doro is himself enslaved, then extinguished: 'He was a member of the Pattern. A Patternist. Property. Mary's property … She consumed him slowly, drinking in his terror and his life, drawing out her own pleasure, and laughing through his soundless screams' (ibid.: 220). This is a dramatic, ironic reversal of fortune for a man who has been enslaving and consuming others for millennia.

As satisfying as it surely is to see the tables turned on Doro, however, we cannot assume that Mary will be able to escape the temptations of non-consensual power. She may be destined to become a female Doro. The tendency among feminist critics, however, has been to argue otherwise. Marleen Barr maintains that Mary 'uses her power to create a new community, a new body of men and women' (Barr 1987:77). Similarly, Robin Roberts suggests that Mary is a kind of nurturing 'queen bee' whose community-centred values make her preferable to the patriarchal Doro (Roberts 1993:107). Unfortunately, we don't really know for certain how Mary's regime will compare to that of Doro. Her rule is established at the very end of *Mind of My Mind*, and develops within the narrative gap which exists between that book and *Clay's Ark*. But we may reasonably imagine that Mary – a former slave herself – at least has the potential to feel sympathy for those she dominates, as Doro could not. And Butler does show us enough of Mary's relationship with the Patternists in *Mind of My Mind* to convince us that Mary does genuinely care for her telepaths, that she sees them not as breeding stock but as members of a vibrant organic community. Still, we cannot ignore the fact that while Mary's regime may be more nurturing and more organic than Doro's, it remains a non-consensual slave system nonetheless. Members of the Pattern have no choice but to participate, and all are forced to acknowledge Mary's absolute power.

It is only in the final volume of the *Patternist* series, *Wild Seed*, that Butler shows us an egalitarian relationship based upon the exchange of erotic power. Though *Wild Seed* was one of the last books to appear in the *Patternist* series, it represents the beginning of the narrative which runs through that series. (The tension between these two sequences – publication and narrative – is one way in which Butler's work refuses the too-convenient comforts of linear narrative.) *Wild Seed* tells us of Doro's origins, and of his centuries-spanning power struggle with the immortal shape-shifting woman called Anyanwu. That this is a *political* struggle is clear; Stacy Alaimo has described it as 'a battle between two modes of knowing and being: the tyrannical force of an egotistical, disembodied mind and the transformative powers of an utterly embodied woman' (Alaimo 1998:126). In one sense, then, this is the story of the postmodern body's revenge upon the Enlightenment's mythology of human subjectivity. But *Wild Seed* is much more than that. It is also an account of the ways in which power and desire flow between Doro and Anyanwu. It is, in short, a sadomasochistic love story.

Like any dominant, Doro finds that what he wants more than anything else is Anyanwu's submission. Lacan might say Doro desires the desire of the Other. The problem is that Anyanwu is 'wild seed'. She is a genetic aberration, and not the product of Doro's selective breeding programme. She is thus quite difficult to control, but Doro hopes that, 'like no other wild seed, Anyanwu would learn to fear him and bend herself to his will' (Butler 1980:90). He will settle for nothing less than total obedience. Anyanwu must even learn to define ethics in Doro's terms. 'She would learn that right and wrong were what he said they were' (ibid.: 92). Yet, time and time again, Doro is frustrated in his quest to gain power over Anyanwu. She remains untameable. 'What will I have to do next to teach you to obey?' Doro laments (ibid.: 176). When Anyanwu finally does begin to submit, it is only because her instincts of self-preservation are strong. She knows that Doro could kill her; to protect herself, she submits. This is not (yet) an ethical or erotic submission: she submits out of necessity, without desire. Thus 'Doro had reshaped her. She had submitted and submitted and submitted to keep him from killing her … she had formed the habit of submission' (ibid.: 196). But that is not all she develops. Anyanwu comes to enjoy Doro's attentions: 'Anyanwu enjoyed his touches even now when she thought they were more imprisoning than caressing' (ibid.: 94). In short, she learns to eroticise the power relations which exist between her and Doro. By doing so, she alters the basic nature of their relationship.

The erotic power which begins to flow between Anyanwu and Doro becomes entirely distinct from the ethically problematic forms of power which Butler described in the previous *Patternist* books. One crucial difference is that these power relations are based upon reciprocal desire. Another important difference is that they are reversible. Here the joke, as always, is on Doro. From the very moment that Doro attains erotic mastery over Anyanwu, he begins to develop what Hegel called a 'dependent consciousness'.[5] Doro is enslaved by his desire for Anyanwu, by his all-consuming need to dominate the one woman who could possibly be his equal. It takes Doro several centuries and an entire novel to realise that this is happening to him.

Anyanwu, however, articulates her strategy on page 9 of *Wild Seed*: 'She knew some people were masters and some were slaves. That was the way it had always been … She had become a kind of master herself. "Sometimes, one must become a master to avoid becoming a slave," she said softly' (ibid.: 9). This, then, is the dance which these two immortals perform through the centuries: 'mastering' and 'enslaving' one another in a permanent spiral of mutual desire.

The culmination of the erotic relationship between Anyanwu and Doro occurs near the end of the novel. In a scene which is deeply charged with erotic energy, Doro feeds upon Anyanwu's life essence, taking her as close to death as he can without killing her. The scene reveals the depths of Doro's desires, and the extent to which he is controlled by those desires:

'I had to know you that way at least once,' he said. 'I had to touch you that way.'
'Why?' she asked.
'Because it's the closest I'll ever come to you.'

(Butler 1980:259)

This remarkable kinky love scene highlights the importance of mutual, consensual desire. Doro 'wondered what she would say if he told her no one had ever before enjoyed such contact with him. No one in nearly four thousand years … But Anyanwu had participated, had enjoyed, had even taken the initiative for a while, greatly intensifying his pleasure' (ibid.: 260). For millennia, Doro has been a psychic rapist, consuming people's consciousness against their will. Now he is astonished to discover that what he really wants and needs is not an unwilling victim but a partner, someone who genuinely enjoys the exchange of power and can participate in that exchange as an equal. Here is the supreme irony: Anyanwu has made the ultimate submission to Doro. She has offered him her life. And yet by doing so, she has gained total power over him. Through the reciprocal, consensual exchange of power and desire, Anyanwu has accomplished something truly remarkable. She has reappropriated slavery, and transformed it from an ethical abomination into something beautiful. She has discovered a kind of erotic play-slavery. *Wild Seed* presents this play-slavery as an effective strategic and symbolic challenge to Doro's ugly, empire-building slavery. A text would have to be kinky *and* postanarchist to achieve something like that.

A land of wholly inverted values: postanarchist kink in Samuel Delany's *Nevèrÿon* books

Like Butler, Samuel Delany speaks from the literary and erotic margins. Indeed, many of his most interesting ideas can be articulated *only* from a position which is marginal to mainstream literature and sexuality. Those interpretations of Delany's work which fail to recognise this are doomed to remain incomplete. In her frequently cited essay on 'Recent Feminist Utopias', for example, Joanna Russ makes the rather astonishing claim that Delany writes from an 'implicit level of freedom' simply because he is male (Russ 1981:83). Russ chooses to disregard the ways in which Delany, a gay African American who writes S/F about S/M, is automatically relegated to the margin of the margins. As science fiction, Delany's texts are marginal to literature. There is a subtle but persistent concern for race in Delany's work, and this is certainly enough to make his project marginal to that of white literature. His elaborate articulation of gay themes makes his writing marginal to heterosexual literature. And his frequent discussions of S/M make his work marginal to vanilla literature. By focusing only on Delany's gender, Russ disregards these important margins. Damien Broderick gets a bit closer; he recognises that, as a gay black man, Delany does write about marginal experience (Broderick 1995:120). And yet Broderick still does not give us a complete picture of Delany's work. He ends up suggesting, rather implausibly, that Delany's 'fiction is articulated about a semiotic programme which seems, at its limit, to merge with humanist, albeit highly relativist, liberal pluralism' (ibid.: 138). This misconception stems from the fact that Broderick acknowledges some of the margins which Delany occupies (gay/black) but disregards another (kinky). This is an essential omission, for it is precisely Delany's commitment to the principles of erotic power exchange that makes his work incompatible with the tradition of liberal humanism. Humanism has amply demonstrated that it has room for a great many different identities, including those of ethnic minority groups and possibly even homosexuals. But it has not, so far, shown that it has any room for kink, and the one thing it has not yet learned to tolerate is frank

discussions of power. Delany's work points us not towards any liberal humanism (however pluralist), but rather towards a kinky postanarchism.

Delany is a deeply political thinker, with a strong sense of ethics. Nowhere is this more clear than in his philosophy of kink. The cornerstone of Delany's system of erotic ethics is a principle of consent informed by desire, which is something that his system has in common with many anarchist ethical philosophies. In a number of ways, in a variety of different texts, Delany makes this fundamental point: desired and consensual forms of power exchange are ethically acceptable and potentially erotic; undesired, non-consensual forms of power are intrinsically unethical and non-erotic. Delany is especially careful to articulate the vital distinction between erotic and political power: 'To assume a session of "sexual torture" between two consenting adults requires only minimal reorganization of what goes on in an actual session of political torture – and in any way manifests the same "power relations"–signs only gross ignorance of the context *and* the substance of *both* situations!' (Delany 1994:140). It is ethics, of course, which separates the two situations. In *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, Delany highlights and sharpens this ethical point by describing a world in which 'all sadomasochism was hunted out and punished with barbaric singlemindedness; especially if concert [sic] was written out or clearly specified by verbal contract, which their authorities considered the ultimate disease' (Delany 1984:215). Reading this passage, one experiences a remarkable ethical vertigo: *why* should consensual S/M be repressed *in particular*? What is it about such practices that the state might find so troubling? Perhaps it is the fact that consensual erotic power exchange threatens the state's jealously guarded (and non-consensual) power monopoly. That would be a very anarchist interpretation.

Like Butler, Delany provides extensive meditations on slavery. And like Butler, Delany understands that 'slavery' can refer either to a non-consensual set of socio-economic relations or to the consensual eroticisation of such relations. (This eroticisation represents a particular form of the more general practice of erotic power exchange.) Indeed, 'slavery' is a slippery signifier which can sometimes slide back and forth between the two meanings. Delany's Gorgik is a character who has experienced both real slavery and play-slavery; he seems to feel that one can lead to another: 'Fire, slavery, cloth, coin, and stone – these are the basis of civilized life. Sometimes it happens that one or another of them gets hopelessly involved in the most basic appetites of a woman or a man' (Delany 1979:143). But Delany also recognises that the eroticisation of class relations represents a potentially potent threat to the dominant social order: 'The easier it is to name, survey, and pathologize the eroticization of any particular set of class relations, then the more *dangerous* that set of relations – and their eroticization – is to patriarchal *status quo* phallocentric society' (Delany 1994:136). S/M eroticises the class relations which are such a fundamental part of chattel slavery; by this logic, S/M must be one of the most dangerous forces ever unleashed against the patriarchy. For no erotic practice has been more thoroughly catalogued, more ruthlessly medicalised. From Krafft-Ebing's vast nineteenth-century inventory of perversions to today's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, erotic power exchange has remained one of psychology's great obsessions.[6] It's no wonder that the patriarchy has done everything within its considerable power to control the discourse surrounding S/M, for as long as S/M remains trapped within the psychiatric discourse, the threat which it represents is contained.

Clearly, Delany is fascinated by the politics of kink, and he has devoted considerable paraliterary effort to the exploration of these politics. Erotic power relations are at the thematic core of the multi-volume sword and sorcery epic which Delany initiated in 1979 with *Tales of Nevèrÿon*. Delany tells us that it was in these stories that he 'turned to examine some of the real (i.e., again, I mean political) problems that the idea of S/M brings up' (Delany 1999:118). And it's clear that this exploration has a deep personal significance for him. 'Should you really want to know what this weird Delany guy is all about, *these* are the books to wrestle with', Delany assures us (ibid.: 119). But why did Delany choose the much-maligned genre of sword and sorcery fantasy as the forum in which to speak about ideas which are clearly so important to him? He recognises that sword and sorcery is 'SF's despised younger cousin' (Delany 1994:46). Indeed, he goes out of his way to emphasise that sword and sorcery represents 'the margin of the margin' (ibid.: 71). Perhaps, then, Delany chose sword and sorcery precisely because it *is* marginal – indeed, because it exists on the margins of an already marginal paraliterary genre

called science fiction. After all, such a doubly marginal genre is perfect for a discussion of that most marginal of sexual strategies, erotic power exchange. By choosing sword and sorcery, Delany is not merely accepting marginal status. He is insisting upon it.

Like almost all of Delany's books, the *Nevèrÿon* stories draw very clear lines between non-consensual socio-economic power and consensual, desired erotic power. Delany is especially careful to distinguish slavery from play-slavery. Nevèrÿon is a slave society, and Nevèrÿon's slave system reproduces the power relations of the antebellum American South, down to the last detail. Delany is careful to emphasise, for example, the special status of the favoured administrative ('house') slaves, who in Nevèrÿon wear ornate covers over their iron slave collars as a sign of relative rank. Of course, these elite slaves must contend with the inevitable feelings of guilt and complicity which result from their collaboration with slavery. Collar covers 'add far more weight to the neck than the circle of iron they cover', observes one house slave (Delany 1979:224). Delany uses the symbol of the collar cover to illustrate the morass of moral dilemmas which slavery inevitably produces.

In order to ensure that the *Nevèrÿon* series can describe the entire history of slavery, Delany employs a clever technique of narrative acceleration. Historical developments which took centuries in the real world take decades in Nevèrÿon. This allows characters to comment on broad historical transformations. Some of these characters are able to describe the problems that emerge when slaves are emancipated. 'Freedom is not so simple a thing as that', a house slave points out when confronted with possible liberation. 'Where do you expect us to go? If we leave here, what do you expect will happen to us?' (ibid.: 221). Here Delany recognises that the transition from a traditional economy based on chattel slavery to a market economy based on formally free wage labour will not be an easy one. The former slaves who join the ranks of the impoverished urban working class may find that their lives have not improved. Indeed, another house slave argues that 'you free the labor pens into a world where, at least in the cities and the larger towns, a wage-earning populace, many of them, is worse off than here' (ibid.: 225).

Despite these potential (and, in the case of American history, very real) problems, many citizens of Nevèrÿon are willing to fight for the abolition of slavery, under the leadership of a former slave known as Gorgik the Liberator. Delany makes it easy to see why slavery arouses such intense anger. The ethical atrocities which result from this kind of non-consensual socio-economic power are clear, particularly when Delany examines the sexual dimension of the slave system. In Nevèrÿon, as in the antebellum American south, slavery encourages rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Long before he begins his campaign against slavery, Gorgik (not yet 'the Liberator') visits the slave market. 'Buy me, lord!' begs a woman slave. 'You will take me, please, away from him! We go to the desert tribes and I'll be sold there again. Do you know what they do to women slaves in the desert? I was there before. I don't want to go back' (ibid.: 135). Surely few moral crusades could be more inspirational than the campaign to end to such violations.

And yet the same narrative which contains this thorough critique of socio-economic slavery also includes a very sympathetic portrayal of consensual, desired play-slavery. Gorgik does not buy the woman at the slave market. Instead, he purchases a slave boy called Small Sarg. Sarg suggests that Gorgik should have bought the woman instead, for he could have had her work by day, her body by night. Gorgik replies, 'you think I'll get any less from you?' (ibid.: 137). At first, this sounds like another example of non-consensual sexual slavery. But in fact the relationship between Gorgik and Sarg is far more complex than that. The first time Gorgik approaches Sarg sexually, he informs Sarg that the boy must wear a slave collar this time, but that on another night Gorgik will take the collar off Sarg and put it on himself (ibid: 143). It turns out that Gorgik's sexuality is directly linked to the symbol of slavery. It doesn't matter to him which partner wears the collar, because the roles are reversible, as they often are in S/M (Foucault 1984:169). The specific power configuration of Gorgik and Sarg's first encounter seems quite arbitrary: Gorgik refuses to wear the collar himself only because he does 'not feel like wearing it … at least tonight' (Delany 1979:143).

Even if we read the first encounter between Gorgik and Sarg as non-consensual, this aspect of their relationship seems to last no longer than one night. The next morning, Sarg awakes to find Gorgik asleep, the collar off. Sarg slips away and could easily have escaped. He finds a girl

hiding in the bushes; the first thing she says to him is 'you're not a slave now' (ibid.: 145). Perhaps to emphasise this, Delany has the girl repeat this point twice more: 'you are a slave no longer' and 'you are not a slave any more' (ibid.: 148). This triple invocation, formulated a bit differently each time, suggests that Sarg has indeed left socio-economic slavery behind. He chooses to stay with Gorgik, shares desire with him and fights by his side. Gorgik does sometimes wear the collar; when he does, he calls Sarg 'little master' (ibid.: 234). When Gorgik tries to explain the nature of their relationship to others, he claims that 'we are both free men' (ibid.: 237). The reality, however, is that neither is free, for they are both enchained by mutual desire. By participating in a kind of play-slavery, Gorgik and Small Sarg reappropriate the symbolic structure of the socio-economic slavery which they hate, and use that structure to fulfil their erotic needs.

Certainly, Delany is well aware of the explosive danger which is contained within such play-slavery. In *Neveryóna*, the second volume of the *Nevèrÿon* series, Small Sarg turns against Gorgik. 'Before you sits a man whose every word and act is impelled by lusts as depraved as any in the nation, who would make a slave of all and anyone to satisfy them, calling such satisfaction freedom!' says Sarg of his former lover (Delany 1983:77). We don't know what, exactly, caused Sarg to reject the relationship which he once shared with Gorgik; these developments occur 'off-stage', outside Delany's narrative. But the fact that Sarg was able to leave Gorgik is important. As Highleyman observes, a play-slave 'has an out', and this is one thing that makes his situation very different from that of African American slaves in the nineteenth century (Highleyman 1997: para. 16). Sarg tries to kill Gorgik, but Sarg himself is killed in the ensuing conflict. Yet even though Small Sarg has just tried to kill him, Gorgik will allow no ill to be spoken of his former lover. 'But that man, dead on the tile, was also a friend – once', Gorgik declares. 'Had his friendship not been so great, his hatred might have been less' (Delany 1983:87). Gorgik still remembers Sarg fondly, and even Sarg's betrayal is not enough to dissuade Gorgik from his campaign to bring ethics to power. As always, he continues this campaign on two simultaneous fronts, waging a guerrilla campaign against the institution of slavery while also deploying erotic power relations as a dramatic ethical alternative to that institution. *Flight From Nevèrÿon*, the third volume in the series, finds Gorgik in another kinky relationship, this time with a one-eyed former mine slave called Noyeed. Gorgik and Noyeed develop their relationship consciously, with great deliberation and care. 'What we do together, you and I,' says Noyeed, 'we do very much awake' (Delany 1985:123). Noyeed and Gorgik recognise the dangers inherent in a relationship such as theirs, and they are mindful of the example of Small Sarg. Nonetheless, they still choose erotic play-slavery, as a liberating alternative to the socio-economic slave system which they fight by day.

I must, therefore, strongly contest the interpretation advanced by Robert Elliot Fox. In his study of sexual politics in Delany's work, Fox asserts that

one of the things which is so thoroughly repulsive about the master/slave relationship in sado-masochism is that it is a psychosexual parody of a relationship (which, to be sure, had its own psychosexual aspect) involving large masses of people, not just individuals, under conditions of the most overt compulsion.

(Fox 1996:52)

Here Fox completely fails to grasp the nature of consensual, desired play-slavery. On Delany's worlds and moons, this type of 'slavery' represents a liberation precisely because it replaces a non-consensual form of slavery – which both liberals and anarchists would probably find repulsive – with a form of play based upon consent and mutual desire. In the land of Nevèrÿon, it is not the radicalness of Gorgik's campaign against the institution of slavery that bothers the ruling class (since that institution was dying anyway, of 'natural' economic causes); '[r]ather, it was the radicalness of his appearance that had bothered the nobles, merchants, and their conservative employees – not the Liberator's practice so much as his potential; for appearances are signs of possibilities' (Delany 1985:9). We cannot afford to discount the significance of this point, because the *Nevèrÿon* books, like much of Delany's writing, operate within a semiotic system which is informed by the poststructuralist theories of people like Foucault. Within such a semiotic system, the most significant political acts are likely to occur not on the material level of political economy, but on the level of sign and symbol. In this respect, as in many others, Delany's work is postanarchist. Jes Battis has recently noted the specifically kinky valence of Gorgik's semiotic system: 'it is through S/M sexuality ... that Gorgik stages political interventions within the gendered order of his own world' (Battis 2009:480). A

semiotic system like this demands that we take seriously arguments such as the one that Gorgik advances: 'As one word uttered in three different situations may mean three entirely different things, so the collar worn in three different situations may mean three different things. They are not the same: sex, affection, and society' (Delany 1979:238). By developing this radically contextual theory of semiotics and symbolism, Gorgik (and Delany) resolve the apparent contradiction which Fox believes he has identified. The symbolic redemption of slavery from the semiotic and ethical abyss in which it lingers is a crucial part of Delany's project. Jeffrey Allen Tucker is right to suggest that 'Gorgik became a revolutionary who sought to attain for himself and all slaves in Nevèrÿon the power to wrest symbolic control of the slave collar from the aristocracy and the freedom to shift the significance of the collar from one context to another' (Tucker 2004:148). This is the apex of Delany's kinky poststructuralist anarchism: freedom is defined here as the power to create context, the right to signify freely.

But if we wish to observe the full realisation of Delany's theory of erotic power, we must *Return to Nevèrÿon*. In a book by that name (originally published as *The Bridge of Lost Desire* in 1987), Delany brings his philosophy of power as close to a conclusion as such an open-ended theoretical project could come. In 'The Game of Time and Pain', a tale set shortly after the liberation of Nevèrÿon's slaves, we learn that S/M is 'one of the more common perversions in a Nevèrÿon so recently awakened from a troubling dream of slaves' (Delany 1987:24). Here Delany makes explicit the historical connection between non-consensual socio-economic slavery and its consensual erotic reflection. This connection might seem to have ominous ethical implications for play-slavery. But here it is crucial to consider Delany's philosophy of history. In *Return to Nevèrÿon*, he assures us that history, 'despite our masters, is never inevitable, only more or less negotiable' (ibid.: 34).[7] Delany goes on to argue that history must 'be founded as richly on desire as on memory' (ibid.: 74). His argument points towards a radically subjective form of history – indeed, it suggests a kind of Lacanian history. After all, Lacan saw desire as the Freudian version of the Cartesian *cogito*: the 'nodal point' where subjectivity occurs (Lacan 1981:154). Delany's work suggests that history is experienced by this desiring subject.[8] But what might such a negotiated, subjective, desiring history look like? Clearly, such a history would involve what Nietzsche called a 'revaluation of all values' (Nietzsche 1969:254, 310–13). Thus Delany's Gorgik dreams of 'a land of wholly inverted values where the very sign of my servitude, the iron at my neck, would be taken by all I met as a symbol of transcendent freedom' (Delany 1987:34).

For Gorgik and for other citizens of Nevèrÿon, such an inversion of values is inherently political. For us it is anarchist: as always, the relevant politics are the politics of consent and desire. Delany's storytelling emphatically demonstrates that non-consensual socio-economic slavery cannot be erotic. Gorgik recalls an erotic moment which he experienced when he was still a slave. Temporarily uncollared, Gorgik watched an aristocrat place a slave collar around his own neck – and Gorgik felt desire. But when the aristocrat discovered that Gorgik was watching, he quickly moved to re-collar the slave. Gorgik speaks of the collar: 'And just as I had recognized the sexual in his placing of it about his own neck, I knew that, though lust still reeled in his body and still staggered in mine, this gesture was as empty of the sexual as it is possible for a human gesture to be' (ibid.: 54). The fundamental realisation that no reconciliation is possible between socio-economic slavery and play-slavery sets Gorgik on the path to true knowledge and true freedom. For this is what Gorgik learned that night in the aristocrat's tent: 'I knew, at least for me, that the power to remove the collar was wholly involved with the freedom to place it there when I wished. And, wanting it, I knew, for the first time since I'd been brought to the mines – indeed, for the first time in my life – the self that want defined' (ibid.: 57). Here Gorgik is announcing a rather remarkable epistemological revolution. It is a revolution of the Lacanian variety, in which the self is actually constituted through desire – and, indeed, through a specifically fetishistic desire, as Georgia Johnston has noted (Johnston 2007:54). But what is truly significant here is not merely the creation of a desiring subject, but rather the fact that through desire this self called Gorgik is set free for the first time in his life. And he is free (indeed, there is a 'he' who can be free) because he has the power to give that freedom up willingly. It is important to note that the 'he' created in this way is not the self sought by modern humanism or the liberal state, for it was Lacanian desire that brought Gorgik into existence, rather than any rationalist Cartesian *cogito*.

Perhaps the meaning of Gorgik, then, is freedom – at least for those citizens of Nevèrÿon who recognise that the ethical wound of non-consensual slavery can be healed, in part, through the consensual exchange of erotic power. For them, as for Gorgik, consent and desire are the razor-sharp blades which separate the ethical from the criminal, the erotic from the economic. As Nevèrÿon awakens from its nightmare of non-consensual slavery, its S/M community flourishes. 'When I was free,' old Gorgik tells his would-be lover, 'I learned that the power, the freedom, the pleasures you and I would indulge here tonight take place within the laws of a marginal society and an eccentric civility that allows us to grasp them, one and the other, with a stunning force and joy that whoever skulks after them like a slave cannot imagine' (Delany 1987:65). As always, Delany celebrates marginality: explicitly, the marginality of the kinky community, but also Gorgik's and perhaps Delany's own. If Delany's work has a utopian moment, it is surely this. In liberated Nevèrÿon, Delany dreams of (and Gorgik remembers) a world in which power flows in accordance with the rules of civility and desire. It is a world which recognises the inevitability of power, and simply insists that such power be used ethically.

Delany's work, like Butler's, embodies an attempt to describe a range of ethical power relations. The basic rule for both authors is that these relations must be consensual and desired. In this sense, their projects are fundamentally anarchistic. But Butler and Delany also represent the culmination of a theoretical tradition which began when Masoch added the concept of consent to the philosophy of erotic power, thus creating the category of practices and strategies which would eventually come to be known as BDSM.[9] Of course, Butler and Delany are interesting not merely because they make innovative contributions to kink theory via the medium of paraliterary genre fiction – though that certainly would be a remarkable enough achievement in its own right. Butler and Delany also expand, enhance and refine kink theory. Surely the most significant contribution which Butler and Delany make to our understanding of power emerges from their reappropriation of the master–slave dynamic. Relationships such as that of Doro and Anyanwu, or Gorgik and Small Sarg, show, as no amount of dialectical thinking ever could, that there is, after all, a kind of mutual reciprocity to such relationships. Most crucially, Butler and Delany give us, through the principle of consent and the practice of mutual desire, a set of tools which we may use to distinguish unethical slavery from ethical play-slavery. This may well turn out to be their lasting contribution to the philosophy of power and to the erotic practices which flow from that philosophy.

Notes

1 I use the phrase 'speculative fiction' rather than 'science fiction' so that Delany's *Nevèrÿon* books, which describe vital components of his philosophy of power, may be included in the discussion.
2 Sadly, Marxism is no help here. As Rubin points out, 'the issue of consent has been clouded by an overly hasty application of Marxian critiques of bourgeois contract theory to sex law and practice' (Rubin 1982:222). So liberalism and Marxism share the suspicion that kink can't be consensual. But the anarchist concept of consent, which is broader, deeper and more open than those of most other political philosophies, may have room for kink.
3 Mistress Venus recognises that if there is a reactionary danger in what she does, that comes from the fact that her kink is inscribed within the structures of capitalist exchange. It is capitalism, not kink, that promotes 'body fascism' (Anarchist Federation 2002:8).
4 See White (1985) for a good account of the enormous dilemmas which female slaves faced, especially with respect to issues of sexuality and reproduction.
5 In a well-known section from *The Phenomenology of Mind* entitled 'Lordship and Bondage', Hegel examined the richly intricate ways in which masters and slaves come to depend upon one another. He concluded that since the consciousness of the master must always be mediated through the consciousness of the slave, the master cannot attain true independence, but only a 'dependent consciousness' (Hegel 1967:234ff).
6 Moser and Kleinplatz (2005) have argued eloquently, however, that the American Psychiatric Association should remove sexual sadism and sexual masochism from its DSM. Although the paraphilias will likely remain in the DSM, the proposed revisions to DSM-5 would distinguish paraphilias from paraphilic *disorders*. This is meant to reflect a consensus among clinicians that paraphilias such as sexual sadism or sexual masochism 'are not *ipso facto* psychiatric disorders' (American Psychiatric Association 2010).
7 The emphasis which Delany places on negotiation is not surprising. Real world S/M communities, including the California communities with which I am most familiar, often regard negotiation as one of the most important skills. Jay Wiseman calls it *the* most important (Wiseman 1996:57). Pat Califia points out that the community uses negotiation for everything from individual scenes to entire relationships (Califia 2001:25).
8 It's interesting to note here that Lacan said of the analytic method that 'its operations are those of history' (Lacan 1968:19).
9 Masoch used the mechanism of the contract to explore the concept of consent in his famous erotic novel *Venus in Furs* (von Sacher-Masoch 1991 [1870]).

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Chapter 8

Fantasies of an anarchist sex educator[1]

Jamie Heckert

Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together? From the moment we enter a school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart. The fishermen of the Colombian coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word *sentipensante*, feeling-thinking, to define the language that speaks the truth.

—Eduardo Galeano, *The Book of Embraces*

'A spell', says anarchist, feminist and Witch, Starhawk, 'is a story we tell ourselves that shapes our emotional and psychic world' (Starhawk 2002:155). She brings attention to the powerful spells cast by corporate media and other authorities in the wake of September 11: stories of fear, of security through control and of the inevitability (and righteousness) of war. Stories we may come to believe and to tell ourselves, perhaps in different forms. Stories that can be resisted. 'The counterspell', she says, 'is simple: tell a different story' (ibid.).

Writing this essay has been an exercise in putting my pieces together, in telling different stories. The casting of these counterspells has been anything but simple. One night, struggling with this process, I wrote in a bedside notebook, 'It is painful to write, to speak. Silence is familiar, if not comfortable. So, too, telling stories that act as cloaks, covering the vulnerability of honest naked flesh. Holding back the flow of words, emotions, life. Disconnecting.' Stories I find easy to tell *are* simple: they are the stories I learned to tell in order to survive. These stories, simple stories, aren't working for me any more. I crave deeper sustenance, something more than survival. 'The politics worth having, the relationships worth having, demand that we delve still deeper' (Rich 2001a: 39). This delving, argues Adrienne Rich, lies in honesty. And for her, truth is never simple:

There is no 'the truth', 'a truth'–truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity. The pattern of carpet is a surface. When we looked closely, or when we became weavers, we learned of the tiny multiple threads unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet.

(Rich 2001a: 32)

If truth is never simple, neither is learning to weave. To look closely at the patterns of one's own life is to find ways to resist profound forms of psychic domination, to potentially find ways to weave counterspells. To share the stories one finds reading these patterns can be an act of solidarity. That is both my hope in sharing these stories and my experience hearing and reading the stories of others. The stories of people I interviewed for my PhD research (Heckert 2005), stories of violence and desire (e.g. Allison 1993; Dunbar-Ortiz 1998), stories of friends and strangers; these are the stories that help me to imagine my own life (Le Guin 2004a), to cast my own counterspells.

I can relate to the male Latin American poets that Adrienne Rich criticised for writing as if 'the enemy is always outside the self, the struggle somewhere else' (Rich 2001b: 28). It is a practice that no longer sustains me. Now, more than ever, I feel a great affinity with the wisdom born of feminist movement,[2] that there can be no clear-cut division between the personal and the political:

Throughout my life somebody has always tried to set the boundaries of who and what I will be allowed to be ... What is common to these boundary lines is that their most destructive power lies in what I can be persuaded to do to myself – the walls of fear, shame, and guilt I can be encouraged to build in my own mind ... I am to hide myself, and hate myself, and never risk exposing what might be true about my life. I have learned through great sorrow that all systems of oppression feed on public silence and private terrorization ... For all of us, it is the public expression of desire that is embattled, any deviation from what we are supposed to want and be, how we are supposed to behave.

(Allison 1995:117)

In writing the fantasies for this piece, I deepen my acknowledgement of the struggles within as well as those without. In sharing them, I end some of my silence.

Before beginning the sharing, I want to be clear in my agreement with the notion that there is 'no such thing as a true story' (Chödrön 2002:17; see also, e.g., Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 1997). (Or, in other words, rather than telling an absolute truth, 'story tells human truth' [Le Guin 2009:119]). Others present at the events I describe might tell very different stories. *I*

could tell different stories myself. These are the ones I choose to tell today, experiencing the dignity of speaking (only) for myself (Deleuze 1977; Tormey 2006).

I have fantasies of getting in trouble

I find myself waiting for it – the next insult, the next assault. My muscles tighten in preparation, as though I still lived in the house of my father and his drinking, as though I were still in school and a target for violence. I expect strangers, friends and lovers to realise what I imagined others knew – that I'm not good enough, that I'm not doing it right.

I remember walking home from school one day, I must have been ten, and finding a large, solid sheet of ice. I tried to carry it as a shield to protect myself; it was too heavy. Holding it, I could hardly move. I wonder, do my arms and shoulders ache because I'm holding it still?

Does my gut clench because it is still braced for a punch? Or is my belly irritable because I learned not to listen to it? What good were the signals from my body, my belly, my heart, that something wasn't right, when there was so little I could do? Better, it seemed, to ignore them, to fantasise of a better future, of other worlds. The present held little promise.

In the meantime, the tightening of muscles, the holding of breath, the freezing of myself continues, stemming the flow of emotion. Tears halt, fears burrow, fury abides. I focus, instead, on survival. Survival and escape.

The nightmares were intense when I decided to try to stay living in the UK with my new lover, thirteen years ago. I would wake us both up, terrified by visions of police chasing me through the streets. I was sure I wouldn't be allowed to stay. The authorities would know, somehow, that I was dangerous, queer, an anarchist.

I worried, too, when I started working for the council. I waited until I was 'legal', having received the first of many stamps in my passport granting me temporary 'leave to remain'. My new job was going into schools and talking with teenagers about sex. I could just imagine the tabloid headline – SEX CLASSROOM SCANDAL: QUEER FOREIGN ANARCHIST CORRUPTING OUR YOUTH.

Finishing my PhD on anarchism and sexuality, I did not believe I would get it. For so much of my life I've been in trouble for talking about sex, for questioning authority. How could I get rewarded for it now? Even as I prepared to graduate, I had visions of some university hierarch standing up, pointing at me and shouting, 'Anarchist, out!'

Writing this current chapter, I've been afraid, wondering, how will this get me in trouble?

These fantasies aren't surprising, really. I've been in trouble most of my life.

In the microcosm of the tiny Midwestern town of my childhood, I learned that difference was dangerous. Security, I was taught in so many lessons, comes from sameness. An atheist in a Christian town, I was the regular object of evangelical efforts. Why didn't I believe what they believed? When, as a teenager, I played fantasy role-playing games instead of baseball, I was warned of the dangers to my mental health as well as to my soul. When I continued to follow my own desires, rumours spread that I was a Satanist. Intertwined with this were others' anxieties about my gender/sexuality, expressed as something that was wrong with me. I was the one who was *different* (i.e. 'disgusting', 'perverted', 'gay') – an object of both fascination and contempt.

It wasn't just at school, in the so-called public sphere, that I was in trouble. My father abused alcohol when I was growing up. He was a respected member of the community, working in the local furniture store and serving on the city council. I remember once when I was young, watching him shaking hands and smiling with a customer in the store. I didn't understand how anyone could like him. Didn't they know what he was like? I don't know how I expected them to know. I just knew that I was often afraid of him. When he was angry, my mother, brother, sister and I were all potential targets. When he was angry, we were in trouble. When he was angry, it was one of us who was making trouble. He claimed the authority to define the laws, to make judgements and give out punishments. Sameness, in the forms of agreement and obedience, offered some security from his wrath. Our household was a micro-state and for the most part I played my part in a vain attempt to evade my father's violence.

Here and in school, I was assessed – in trouble when found wanting, praised when successful/compliant according to the terms of those assessing. Marshall Rosenberg refers to

this state that the cultures of my school and home encouraged as 'emotional slavery', in which 'we believe ourselves responsible for the feelings of others. We think we must constantly strive to keep everyone happy. If they don't appear happy, we feel responsible and compelled to do something about it' (Rosenberg 2003:57).

How did I survive growing up in this patriarchal household, in a small conservative town? Fantasies. One time when my father sent me to fetch him yet another beer from the refrigerator, I shook it ever so slightly. Not enough that it would actually foam all over him when he opened it, but enough that I could imagine it. When it was my turn to set the table for dinner, I gave him the odd plate or piece of cutlery when I had the chance, so that, I fantasised, he would realise he was different and unwanted and would leave us to get on with our lives in peace. I knew that being different made you want to leave. I wanted to leave. I escaped into fantasy novels. My favourites were tales of young men who were different; escaping stigma, they became heroes who saved worlds (Eddings 1982; Feist 1982).

I remember sitting in the principal's office with him, Mr Robinson, and two boys who had bullied me in the playground. We were in elementary school, maybe eight or nine years old. I remember trying to make sense of it, to deal with the pain, through fantasy. I was like Luke Skywalker, you see, and they were like Darth Vader and the evil Emperor. It was a battle of good versus evil, and I, of course, was the good guy.

About twenty years later, I went to my ten-year high school class reunion. I was terrified and had hardly slept the night before. I wanted to meet the people who had become monsters in my head, to see them as real people. And so I met the man whom my very young self had labelled 'evil Emperor'. Even while I was viscerally remembering the feeling of his fist in my gut, I listened eagerly to his criticisms of politics and capitalism. He told me about his industrial workplace in the same small town that we had both grown up in, about how people were suffering. I asked him, 'Why do you think people put up with it?' He said simply, 'Because they are afraid.'

I had another strategy. I was 'smart' (in the terms of schools). While this still got me into trouble, both with my classmates for 'being a geek' and with those teachers whose claims to intellectual authority I challenged, it also 'earned' me some respect. I learned here that different was safer when it meant better. If I couldn't get security from sameness, I could get it from success.

This became my key strategy for survival – fantasies of superiority. My 'differences' didn't make me lesser than others, they made me better. The reverse discourse of identity politics I have since rejected (Heckert 2004) was one I embraced in my youth. Homosexuality wasn't a perversion; it was radical, dangerous, *interesting*. My atheism didn't mean I was going to suffer in hell; it was a sign of my superior rationality and intellect – how I would have loved the arrogance of *The God Delusion* (Dawkins 2006). Being in trouble with my dad, well, that meant I wasn't anything like him (I wanted to believe). And being 'good' at school, that meant I could go to college and get out of that town. Then, I fantasised, I would be free.

I dreamed that life would be okay when I got out, as I counted down the days that summer after high school. If I just suffered through this, I'd be okay when I got to college. There, I wouldn't be so different. There, I could succeed. Success, I was taught, brought freedom.

I have fantasies of being an Anarchist Sex Educator

To make a trouble was, within the reigning discourse of my childhood, something that one should never do precisely because that would get one *in* trouble. The rebellion and its reprimand seemed to be caught up in the same terms, a phenomenon that gave rise to my first critical insight into the subtle ruse of power: The prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble. Hence, I concluded that trouble is inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it.

(Butler 1990: vii)

Modern schools and universities push students in the habits of depersonalised learning, alienation from nature and sexuality, obedience to hierarchy, fear of authority, self-objectification, and chilling competitiveness.

(Evans 1978:136)

I felt tremendous relief to arrive at Grinnell College. One of the wealthiest educational institutions in United States, due to its early investment in Intel, the college can easily afford the beneficence of scholarships for working-class kids who are 'good enough'. Accepted by this elite institution, I got to hold on to my fantasies of superiority and success. It was, at the

same time, a place where I could let go of some of the silences I'd been carrying. I came out as gay (and how!), very quickly coming to think of myself as an activist. I loosened my hold on intelligence as rationality, dropping chemistry for women's studies and atheism for paganism. Success took on new forms.

'If you could be the best at anything, what would it be?' A group of us were sitting in the Stonewall Resource Centre at Grinnell asking each other questions. 'Activist,' I said. 'Ah, a revolutionary!' said Ali. I hadn't thought of it like that before. Yeah, maybe revolutionary. Trouble-maker, definitely. It's who I've always been.

Four years before that, I sat on my best friend's bed agreeing that it would be cool to be sex researchers when we grew up. I never thought I really would.

Somehow, I became both: an anarchist sex researcher and educator.

Anarchism seemed so obviously *right* when I met my first anarchist; I was twenty years old at the time, studying 'abroad', in Stirling, Scotland. I was immediately hooked. (And not *just* on him.) It offered visions of other possibilities, a radical critique of the domination I (and so many others) had experienced; it fit with the feminist challenges to hierarchies of gender, class, 'race' and sexuality that I had been eagerly learning about in women's studies classrooms. I was in love.

Studying again in Scotland years later, this time in Edinburgh, I was surprised to find myself writing about anarchism and sexuality. I had thought of anarchism as something I did outside the university, something too dangerous to combine with my research on sexuality.[3] I tried to keep these fears at bay using a strategy I'd found helpful for many years: I tried to be *right*.

Like many people engaged in struggles for post-capitalist, post-state and post-patriarchal cultures, I was deeply moved and inspired reading Derrick Jensen's autobiographical book *A Language Older than Words* (Jensen 2000). I sobbed as I read his stories of familial violence and as I remembered my own. I came to identify with him and his argument. He evocatively links his experiences of domination with wider patterns: economic, political, ecological, sexual, racial and spiritual. His conclusion: civilisation depends on domination and must be stopped. I was drawn to his arguments in part because they seemed even *more radical* than my own position. I was seduced by this book and thrown into confusion. Maybe *he* was right.

Derrick Jensen wrote of his choice to end all communication with his father, which I respect at the same time as I chose otherwise.[4] What concerns me more is that Jensen not only gives up on his father, he gives up on a large proportion of humanity. Quoting Viktor Frankl, a survivor of Auschwitz who said, 'There are only two human races – the race of the decent and the race of the indecent people', Jensen continues:

He is right of course. To restate this in terms of this book's exploration: there are those who listen and those who do not; those who value life and those who do not; and those who do not destroy and those who do. The indigenous author Jack Forbes describes those who would destroy as suffering from a literal illness, a virulent and contagious disease he calls *we'tiko*, or cannibal sickness, because those so afflicted consume the lives of others – human and nonhuman – for private purpose or profit, and do so with no giving back of their own lives. There are those who are well, and those who are sick. The distinction really is that stark.

(Jensen 2000:198)

A line between healthy and sick is one I've been put on the wrong side of too many times to trust any attempt to draw one. However, any concern is quickly brushed aside as the reader is encouraged to identify with the well and the decent:

How can *those of us who are well* learn to respond effectively to those who are not? How can the decent respond to the indecent? If we fail to appreciate and answer this question, those who destroy will in the end cause the cessation of life on this planet, or at least as much of it as they can. The finitude of the planet guarantees that running away is no longer a sufficient response. Those who destroy must be stopped. The question: How?

(Jensen 2000:198–9, emphasis added)

Being a hero, one of the good guys[5,] being *right*, is a common theme in activist literature like *A Language Older than Words* (see Goldberg 2005), in the survival strategies of 'adult children of alcoholics' (Crisman 1991), in academia and in my own history. While I distrust drawing these lines between the good guys and bad guys, the well and the ill, I still find myself doing it. These are the strategies I've used to survive: 'success' in institutionalised education, silences of emotions and desires that don't fit with being 'good', the sameness of being one of the (good) guys, who are at the same time 'weirdos and freaks'–the activists (Anonymous 2000:166). While inverting conventional morality (i.e. bad is the new good) has been life saving for me at times, I worry now about its other effects. For one, it can inhibit transformations of consciousness or social relations (see, e.g., Brown 1995; S. Newman 2004). Also, identifying as

an outsider has often been a great source of loneliness and isolation for me. Even in spaces with other 'outsiders', I can be afraid of losing my status as an insider among the outsiders; here, too, disciplinary labels abound: liberal, reformist, sell-out. In fear, I can silence myself.

I can also silence others. Learning from a number of painful lessons where my desire to be right had led to a loss of connection with others, I decided not to take any sessions in schools during the final period of writing up my PhD thesis. I was terrified that it wouldn't be 'good enough' (what if I wasn't right?). I knew I could easily turn sessions into a defence of my argument, being more concerned with my own needs than those of the young people. They didn't need me trying to convince them of the importance of anarchism to the everyday politics/experience of sexuality. Becoming an Anarchist Sex Educator, as I sometimes do, I fall back on the strategy of pointing to everyday domination in the hope that if others see how bad things are, and how good they could be, it will encourage revolution. I'm not alone in finding comfort in this pattern:

[O]ften I intended my teachings to serve as a conduit to radicalization, which I now understand to mean a certain imprisonment that conflates the terms of domination with the essence of life. Similar to the ways in which domination always already confounds our sex with all of who we are, the focus on radicalization always turns our attention to domination.

(Alexander 2005:8)

Like Jacqui Alexander, I'm concerned about the effects of continuous attention to domination rather than life itself. Is this a source of activist burnout? Of widespread and increasing depression globally? (Of my burnout, my depression?)

Letting go of fantasies of being an Anarchist Sex Educator, I'm faced with new questions. How can sex education *be anarchist*, rather than just a promotion of anarchism?

I have fantasies of anarchist sex education

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

(Lilla Watson)

The state is a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to one another; and one destroys it by entering into other relationships, by behaving differently to one another.

(Landauer 2005 [1910]: 165)

If anarchism is about changing relationships throughout life, then sex education could be just as much a focus of anarchist practice as G8 summits, poverty or climate change (inasmuch as any of these are really separate). Anarchist ethics of prefiguration and mutual aid, of listening and appreciating difference, seem to me to speak clearly to the challenges of sex education (broadly defined). What effects do various forms of oppression have on our capacities for sexual pleasure, for self-care, for intimacy? More specifically, how do particular patterns of domination in particular times and places affect the capacities of the people involved? What practices shift patterns in consciousness and in relationships, undermining domination, nurturing connection, in particular locations?

Sometimes, filled with despair, I have fantasies that this is impossible in schools. I look at the architecture and see in the courtyards and metal bars the shapes of prisons (Foucault 1977). I hear teachers shouting and bells ringing, demanding order. Order – on whose terms? I wince to recall a guidance teacher who encouraged us to lock the door when in the room with young people to stop any unwanted intrusions, never mind how the young people might feel about this. I remember being furious in another school where young people were subjected to a military recruiter immediately before our session. In classrooms, notices on 'appropriate' behaviour frequently equate respect with obedience. And when a young person asked me for permission to go to the toilet, I thought, 'How can I support them to feel capable of making their own decisions when it comes to sex when such basic physical needs as eating, drinking, pissing and shitting are scheduled by external authority and exceptions require permission?' One classroom sign went so far as to say, 'Unless you have a medical condition, please do not ask permission to use the toilet as refusal may cause offence.' How can I encourage listening and empathy in an institution where young people receive so little themselves? How can I nurture capacities for equality when it comes to sex when schools naturalise hierarchy? How does anyone expect institutionalised education, with its cultures of assessment, to result in people prepared to express their desires, listen to those of others and work out together, cooperatively, what to do (or not do)? What are the implications of bureaucracy for sexual

health? Of spending so much time in human constructed environments? Of boredom?

I've heard horror stories of school sex education lessons. The most sickening was when young men told me they had been shown a graphic video of the surgical removal of a cancerous testicle. The use of fear seems to be a common tactic in sex education.

'Are you saying our school nurse is a terrorist?'

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The experiences in the classroom I remember with the most joy are the ones where we had a connection that touched me. I was not giving it to them, giving them what I knew was good for them, giving them what I decided they needed. I was listening. I was responsive.

Touching. Listening. Responsive. Is this education, or is it sex?

'Can sex education be practical?' asked John Wilson (2003) in a controversial article. I say it always already is. My question instead: what is practised?[6]

Or, rather, how might sex education be a practice that changes the present and opens different possibilities for the future?

I have fantasies of erotic education – of learning spaces that let go of judgement, of assessment (how good are you at sex? Are you doing it right? How 'smart' are you? Are you man enough, woman enough, straight enough, gay enough? Are you thin enough? Muscular enough? Beautiful enough?); that awaken the senses; that nurture a capacity for joy in living and learning; that nurture an ever-expanding awareness of one's own embodiment–feelings–thoughts. To profoundly experience both pleasure and pain in all their complexities and flavours, to neither hold too tightly nor be held for long by either, to listen to the needs and desires of other beings as well as to one's own, to resist the will to dominate or to be dominated, to find the will to connect: these are practices for sex, for life itself.

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Listening could be the place to start. Ursula Le Guin (2004b) contrasts two models of communication. The first is information transfer – from A to B or B to A – which reminds me of the policy speak of 'delivering a sex education programme'. Like it was a pizza. It's what Paulo Freire (2000) calls the banking model of education: knowledge is an object, a commodity to be transferred. The second model has more erotic potential: 'intersubjectivity', she says, 'is mutual. It is a *continuous interchange* between two consciousnesses. Instead of an alternation of roles between box A and box B, between active subject and passive object, it is a *continuous intersubjectivity that goes both ways all the time*' (Le Guin 2004b: 188). Her model for this: amoeba sex. Two bodies linking, opening to each other, giving and receiving of each other (literally, for they are sharing genetic material). Listening and telling. Telling, she reminds us, *is* listening:

This is very similar to how people unite themselves and give each other parts of themselves – inner parts, mental not bodily parts – when they talk and listen. (You can see why I use amoeba sex not human sex as my analogy: in human hetero sex, the bits only go one way. Human hetero sex is more like a lecture than a conversation. Amoeba sex is truly mutual because amoebas have no gender and no hierarchy. I have no opinion on whether amoeba sex or human sex is more fun. We might have the edge, because we have nerve endings, but who knows?)

(Le Guin 2004b: 189)

Traditional heterosex education teaches that the bits only go one way, and it does so in the form of a lecture. Well, that was my experience anyway. Maybe yours was different?

Anarchic sex education might invite the possibility that human sex could be more like amoeba sex – with (many) genders *and* with nerve endings! Anarchic sex education might be like amoeba sex, an amoeba orgy in the classroom (or in a social centre or gathering, in the pub or around the kitchen table). Not a worker delivering a pizza: a group of people making a pizza together, or even a group planning to make a pizza, while open to the possibility that it may turn into something else entirely.

But, you might say, a classroom is not like a social centre. It is a space in a hierarchical institution, a place of discipline and punishment. Maybe you remember some of the pain you experienced in school. You're right, anyway. A classroom is different. Usually.

The architecture doesn't demand authoritarian education. Institutions don't force obedience; they can't. Resistance is constrained through cajoling and rewards or threat of trouble, but it never disappears. 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault 1990:95; see also Scott 1990). With the help of an anarchic facilitator and the willingness of a group of young people

(ideally a self-selected affinity group with an ethic of free association – everyone *wants* to be there, with each other), a classroom can become a temporary autonomous zone (Bey 1991), a space for an erotic amoeba orgy when before and after it may host (more or less) orderly rows of 'students', with a 'teacher' giving it to them.

I remember clearly a moment in a school last year. It was early in a session when the group I was working with went silent. 'This isn't what you expected, is it?' I said to them. One young man looked at me and said, 'In a way, it's what we wanted. I thought we wouldn't be allowed to laugh.' 'That would suck,' I responded without thinking. 'Yeah,' he said, looking a little stunned, 'that would suck.'

What if it had been okay for him to cry, too?

let tears come

so we can really

laugh together

carve out spaces

to dream of things better she said

than this she said
(claque 2002)

~~~

Teenagers are always in trouble. In another school session several years ago, a discussion with a group of young men on the topic of homosexuality helped me understand this. They said that they didn't want to act homophobic, but if they didn't, then they would get called gay themselves. We talked about how those things weren't separate, that by continuing to police themselves and each other they were participating in the creation of a policed environment. They were trapped in a cycle and struggled to imagine doing things differently. I asked, 'Can you talk about it?' One replied, 'No, we can't.'

I remember one of my undergraduate psychology lecturers saying that homophobia was a pathology; it's not *us* who are sick, it's *them*. I cheered with others, at the time. After years of working with young men, I see homophobia, the fear of homosexuality, as something to be listened to. It's okay to be afraid. It's okay to be angry. It's okay to *feel* anything. The question for me is, how can each of us learn to take responsibility for our own feelings, to let go of a sense of responsibility for the feelings of others (Rosenberg 2003)?

My fantasy of the school as prison, as a space antithetical to sexual health, comes in part from the pain and anger I feel remembering particular experiences I've had in schools and my great love of autonomy and equality. I also experience profound empathy for the anger I've heard from young people when they talk about their schooling. It's not the only story I could tell. I've also been inspired by the care I've seen teachers express for young people. I remember in particular how appreciative and supportive teachers in one of the Catholic schools were, aware of the challenges of our negotiating entry to the school (not always successfully). They knew how popular we were with the students and I had the impression that they genuinely cared for young people and hoped that they might experience sexual well-being and caring relationships. I am both moved by their care and pained by the patterns of control they seem to uphold in the school.

Teachers, too, are afraid of getting into trouble. After a conference talk advocating anarchism as a source of inspiration for sex education, one schoolteacher said she would love to do this, but how? Parents would be upset.

Maybe parents and teachers need to be listened to, too. Could this be one aspect of anarchist community organising?

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Sessions I did in schools always included space for the young people to sit in small groups and to write questions they may have had about sex, sexuality and/or relationships. I was frequently amazed and inspired by the depth and variety of questions asked. Looking over eight years worth of collected questions, I see some interesting patterns. Young men, for

example, frequently wrote questions like 'How many positions are there?' and 'What's the best position?' Safe questions in a disciplinary culture: quantify, evaluate. Questions that mimic, too, the language of men's lifestyle magazines, with their emphasis on (sexual) performance and managerialism (Tyler 2004).

At the same time, I hear something else in these questions – a desire to develop erotic imaginations.

Here, counterspells may be cast. When the telling of different stories is a listening, responsive to the needs of others as well as honestly recognising one's own needs, it is a powerful act of solidarity. (If not, it may be an imposition, a violation.) I sometimes told the story about the young men who didn't want to be homophobic to men in other schools. A deeply attentive silence was a common response.

I smile, remembering a session in a Catholic school where a young woman exclaimed, 'Oh!' when I hoped for an opening of imaginations, inviting a breakdown of heteronormative divisions between 'foreplay' and 'real sex' by discussing sex between women and the possibilities of pleasure without penetration (see, e.g., Albury 2002; Chalker 2000; Dodson 1987; F. Newman 2004).

Similarly, young men often loved stories focusing on techniques for pleasure, offering alternatives to the medicalised and reproduction-oriented narratives of most sex education. In response to their questions, we discussed techniques for slowing ejaculation and prolonging pleasure (i.e. slower breathing, condom use, squeezing the base of the cock, gently tugging the balls back down and changing activities). Learning Kegel exercises for their PC muscles[7] was also pretty popular ('for next time you're bored in Maths class'). More fraught with young men were explorations of the notion that penetrative pleasures may not only be a one-way street, even in heterosexual relationships (Morin 1998). (Even when discussions were emotionally challenging, as they often were, young men wrote appreciatively of sessions on evaluation forms.)

When young people repeated stories of the evolutionary imperatives of heterosexuality and monogamy, stories I told of the sexual habits and radically egalitarian social organisation of bonobos, of the MMF (male–male–female) triad of swans I saw on a Channel 4 documentary, or of the vast diversity of what we might call sexuality in human cultures around the world and throughout history often excited discussion. Many of the young people also appreciated opening up discussions about the relationship between health and hierarchy (see, e.g., Marmot 2004; Wilkinson 2001), particularly when these were grounded in the concrete experiences of their education and current or future employment.

One could also tell stories of erotic connections between people that were not necessarily genitally focused, opening imaginations to other possibilities in a hypersexual culture (see, e.g., Alexander, Chapter 2). I could tell, for example, the story a friend my age told me of remembering the joy of kissing for hours when he was a teenager. Rather than advocating an authoritarian, not to mention unrealistic, notion of celibacy, such stories might help young people imagine (and practice!) negotiating their own ideas of what constitutes sex, including slow sex (Honoré 2005), no sex (e.g. Packer 2002) and/or safer sex. 'Erika', one of the women I interviewed for my PhD research, described how learning to say no to sex was a crucial part of her healing after childhood sexual abuse (see also Haines 1999):

My first really sexual experience was to decide not to have sex. To just say 'no' to sex and it came out of fear and out of confusion and out of all sorts of shit but actually it was really affirming and sexual and made me feel really sexy because I realised that I couldn't really say 'yes' to sex without knowing what it was like to say 'no.' I'm quite choosy about sex now. I very rarely enter into sex unless I've got a clear inkling that its going to be good because I'm not interested in any sex that's any less than like really, really good. I don't want boring sex anymore. I don't want any of that, or guilt sex or kind of street cred sex or … I don't want any of that. I'm not interested. I think that's one of things that I can't change, is that … that was the beginning of my sex life. I can'tdo anything about that and what I can do is just make sure that its really good now, which I do.

(Erika, in Heckert 2005:145)

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Anarchist sex education might also involve sharing skills of deconstructing stories as an act of solidarity. Bronwyn Davies described how she did this with children in a primary school:

[C]hildren can be introduced to the possibility, not of learning the culture, or new aspects of it, as passive recipients, but as producers of culture, as writers and readers who make themselves and are made within the discourses available to them. It allows them to see the intersection between themselves as fictions (albeit intensely experienced fictions) and the

fictions of their culture – which are constantly being (re)spoken, (re)written and (re)lived

(Davies 1993:2)

Imagine teenagers, and older adults, learning to deconstruct the dominant sexual stories of their cultures! What shifts might occur in the classed, racialised and gendered power relationships of teenage sexuality, where young men engage critically with pornography and young women take apart the messages in lifestyle magazines (and vice versa!)? What could happen if more people questioned the disciplinary nature of state-sponsored sexual health materials? Could this be another route to becoming 'protagonists', as people in the popular movements of Argentina refer to themselves (Sitrin 2006; see also Johnstone 2010)?

Finally, imagination comes from a flexibility and openness not only of the mind, but also of the heart, of the body, as they are inseparable. Learning (and practising!) non-violent communication (NVC) improved my ability to connect emotionally with the young people I was working with, helping me let go of the security I find in intellectualisation. This applies to taking care of myself more generally: I find that the more I care for myself, the more I am able to care for others. What other practices might help (young) people (including 'sex educators') cast off the immobilising effects of fear (Lappé and Perkins 2005) and shame (Scheff 1990), to deepen bodily awareness and connection with emotions?

The nomadic creativity of social movements and grassroots cultures offers continuous sources of inspiration for anarchist sex education. What would happen if (young) people were taught queer histories of HIV/AIDS response?

Gay people invented safe sex. We knew that alternatives – monogamy and abstinence – were *unsafe*, unsafe in the latter case because people do not abstain from sex, and if you only tell them just say no, they will have unsafe sex. We were able to invent safe sex because we have always known that sex is not, in an epidemic or not, limited to penetrative sex. Our promiscuity taught us many things, not only about the pleasures of sex, but about the great multiplicity of those pleasures. It is that psychic preparation, that experimentation, that conscious work on our own sexualities that has allowed many of us to change our sexual behaviours … very quickly and very dramatically.

(Crimp 1987:252–3)

In what spaces might we speak of queer erotic communities (e.g. Hutchins 2007) as well as the nonsexual practices of connection among LGBTQ folk (Sawicki 2004)?

Of course, anarchist sex education is alive and well within autonomous feminist health groups and networks (see, e.g., Anonymous 2003; Gordon and Griffiths 2007; Griffiths and Gordon 2007), including self-help groups (e.g. Shodini Collective 1997), caressing workshops (Anonymous, 2007), resources for autonomy in pregnancy and childbirth (Fannen 2001), discussions of the politics of menstruation (Lisa 2008), DIY contraception and termination, herbal gynaecology (Nelson 1976), feminist histories of reproductive autonomy (e.g. Federici 2004) and more. Another potential source of inspiration coming out of struggles for social transformation and self-care is SOMA, an anarchist group therapy combining elements of radical psychology, anarchism and capoeira angola developed by Roberto Freire in Brazil to undermine the effects of dictatorship on individuals (see Goia 2008).

Fragments of an anarchist sex education might also be found within more mainstream settings. What elements of mutual aid, of listening, of imagination are already present in popular culture (Duncombe 2007), in health promotion practices (e.g. Nutland *et al.* 2003), in schools, universities and youth clubs? Can they be observed, with these observations offered back as gifts (Graeber 2004)? How can they be nurtured, diverting energy from patterns of domination into patterns of connection and care?

I have fantasies of erotic anarchy

What we must work on, it seems to me, is not so much to liberate our desires but to make ourselves infinitely more susceptible to pleasure.

(Foucault 1989:310)

Eroticism is exciting, life would be a drab routine without at least that spark. That's the point. Why has all the joy and excitement been concentrated, driven into that one narrow, difficult-to-find alley of human experience, and all the rest laid to waste? There's plenty to go around within the spectrum of our lives.

(Firestone 1979:147)

The arrogant rationalism, the atheist supremacy, of my youth could not protect me from the dominant Christian values of my cultures. The day a Jehovah's Witness leaflet came through my door, I saw, to my horror, that *their* vision of heaven was remarkably like *my* ideas of an anarchist future.

Both visions might be seen as utopian projections, imagining a future that contains what the

present lacks (Bloch 1986). For Bloch, utopia can act as a method of inspiring social transformation and recognising desires that are not being met. For Hakim Bey, by way of contrast, such visions may be a distraction from enacting those desires. 'Between tragic Past & impossible Future, anarchism seems to lack a Present – as if afraid to ask itself, here & now, WHAT ARE MY TRUE DESIRES? – & what can I DO before it's *too late*?' (Bey 1991:61). While I have a deep sense of appreciation for Bloch, Bey's concern speaks strongly to the shock I felt that day. Tracing this thread of anarcho-mysticism to Rilke's biting critique of the Church helps me understand my fantasies of life after the revolution, of heaven:

The idea that we are sinful and need to be redeemed as a prerequisite for God is more and more repugnant to a heart that has comprehended the earth. Sinning is the most wonderfully roundabout path to God – but why should *they* go wandering who have never left him? The strong, inwardly quivering bridge of the Mediator has meaning only where the abyss between God and us is admitted; but this very abyss is full of the darkness of God; and where someone experiences it, let him [sic] climb down and howl away inside it (that is more necessary than crossing it). Not until we can make even the abyss our dwelling-place will the paradise that we have sent on ahead of us turn around and will everything deeply and fervently of the here-and-now, which the Church embezzled for the Beyond, come back to us.

(Rilke 1989:332–3)

In my efforts to deny pain, I diminish my capacity to experience pleasure.

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One spring when I was in college, I was cycling through campus when suddenly my front wheel turned sideways and I flew over the handlebar. I picked up my bike, locked it to a signpost on the roadside and went into the nearest building – computing services. I didn't feel any pain. In the men's room, I looked in the mirror and was startled by the amount of blood. I tried to clean it up with tissues. Realising it was too much for me to handle, I went to reception and said to the woman working there, who I knew, 'I think I need to go to the hospital or see a doctor or something, but I'm not sure. I'm kinda confused right now.' I remember clearly that as soon as she told me, 'Oda's coming to take you to the hospital,' my awareness switched off. Somebody else was taking care of things. I'd broken off my two front teeth and needed my forehead stitched back together again.

Sometimes, switching off is all you can do. It's a way of adapting, of surviving. In the short term, it can save your life. If it goes on, it can be hard to remember the point of living. While I've never been suicidal, I have struggled with bouts of depression. I've not always known how to feel the pain inside. From my own memories of domestic (and other) violence to the daily struggles I see around me to the global politics of war and climate change, I feel great pain (Sullivan 2004). To cope, I regularly anaesthetise myself in various ways (moralising, intellectualising or distracting myself, with porn or political theory, television or net surfing, with ideas of 'success'). And when I do, I end up feeling worse. Numb.

Repression takes a mammoth toll on our energy, and also on our sensitivity to the world around us. Repression is not a local anaesthetic. If we won't feel pain, we won't feel much else, either – both loves and losses are less intense, the sky less vivid, pleasure is muted. As a doctor working with Vietnam veterans observed, 'The minds pays for its deadening to the state of our world by giving up its capacity for joy and flexibility.'

(Macy and Brown 1998:34)

I don't notice that the sky has gone dull (is it a gradual change?) until a profound experience brings me back into a fuller awareness of life. Have you ever experienced that? I've had it a few times, after great sex or with psilocybin, after massage, yoga or sauna, gardening or other connecting experiences. It's such a joy to remember the beauty of the world. How did I ever forget?

Fantasies.

The continual frustration of pleasure as anticipated rather than lived, of learning to find value only in utility (Winnubst 2006); the continual fear of never being 'good enough' (Crisman 1991; Wikipedia, 2008); the continual shame of embodiment in patriarchal cultures (Lisa 2008) and inequality in hierarchical 'democracies'–all mean its switching off is sometimes the best I can imagine doing. My survival strategy of success, an inheritance of 'phallicised whiteness' (Winnubst 2006:10) and (domestic) violence, takes me 'outside myself' (lang 1992). Caught up in goals and judgements (Success? Failure?), I disconnect again and again from the experience of presence, from the sensations of being. 'The revolutionary is like the frustrated suitor whose single-minded focus remains on wedding and bedding his beloved, failing to take advantage of the pleasures of courting' (Simpson 2004:20). Depressed and judgemental, from 'demanding the impossible' of myself, I adopt a stance of grumpywarriorcool (starr 2007), holding tightly to

my ice shields sure that if I let my guard down others will judge me as harshly as I've come to judge myself. Better to play it cool. Depressed, grumpy anarchist, seeing nothing but domination, I become like Rilke's Panther:

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,

has grown so weary that it cannot hold

anything else. It seems to him there are

a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.
(Rilke 1989:25)

My anarchist fantasies of the end of domination *keep* domination at the very centre of my vision. Central, yet abstracted because the pain is both ignored and held tightly, disconnecting me.

Doing so, I may be once again playing out on an individual level much larger cultural patterns. In an effort to understand why potentially radically liberating impulses transformed into a turning to the State for recognition and legislation (i.e. identity politics), Wendy Brown offers a feminist reading of Nietzsche's account of *ressentiment*, 'the moralising revenge of the powerless' (Brown 1995:61). Resulting from the suffering of false promises of individual freedom and social equality made by liberal democracies, its effects include 'imaginary revenge' (Nietzsche 1969:36) targeted toward a constructed enemy who is seen as responsible for the injury of inequality or a lack of freedom. Focusing on the moral outrage and the desire to return injury, the pain of the original injury is 'anaesthetised'. Shaking the beer can. Trying to bring down 'civilisation'. Demands for State protection. These efforts maintain a position of powerlessness, of permanently injured status, offering anaesthetic for the pain of wanting freedom, equality and connection. Whereas,

all that such pain may long for – more than revenge – is the chance to be heard into a certain release, recognized into self-overcoming, incited into possibilities for triumphing over, and hence losing, itself. Our challenge, then, would be to configure a radically democratic political culture that can sustain such a project in its midst without being overtaken by it, a challenge that includes guarding against abetting the steady slide of political into therapeutic discourse, even as we acknowledge the elements of suffering and healing we might be negotiating.

(Brown 1995:74–5)

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Is it anarchism that is 'trapped between a tragic past and an impossible future' or is it me? I could hold on to my anger and pain at my father, at school bullies, at capitalism and Christianity and the State, furious that my needs were/are not met. I could keep trying to make it all right, to create a world where my needs are met (all the while doing so in the name of abstract values, on behalf of others). But I'm tired.

So tired that I find it increasingly difficult to be anti-State. Not that I am pro-State; I want to have more than two choices, to resist the George Bush logic of 'you're either with us or against us' (CNN 2001). I find that logic entirely too easy to turn against myself, to judge myself not good enough, not anarchist enough. Like Landauer or Deleuze and Guattari, I see the State less as an institution that can be smashed and more as a mode of behaviour, of relating. This understanding was accentuated after attending a course on non-violent communication where I learned to see all forms of behaviour as strategies for meeting needs (Rosenberg 2003). And if the State (like capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy) is a strategy, it is one that I have used and continue to use. It is both a source of my oppression and a resource for my strategies of survival.

I experience meditation as a letting go of thoughts, of feelings, of judgements. I cannot hold on to the stillness; I cannot *make* it happen. All I can do is let go of whatever is not stillness. So, too, mindful sex, alone or with partner(s), is a letting go of all that is not the experiences of connecting with bodies and pleasures.

Perhaps anarchy is similar. I cannot *make* it happen (and not for lack of trying!). If the State cannot be smashed, maybe it can be let go of, with practice. Only as I taste other possibilities, experience them in the fullness of bodymind, do I learn to let go of the State. Slowly, gently, I am becoming-anarchist (Heckert 2010).

Being my own lover (not just a fantasy)

The artist does at [their] best what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to [themselves] and with that revelation to make freedom real.

(James Baldwin, quoted in Alexander 2005:18)

i do it for the joy it brings

because i'm a joyful girl

because the world owes me nothing

and we owe each other the world
(Difranco 1996)

During the Christmas/midwinter festive season of 1992, my best friend gave me a copy of Betty Dodson's *Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving* – a crucial moment of solidarity in my teenage years! An inheritance from feminist consciousness-raising efforts in the US, this book not only affirmed my teenage sex life with myself (including all my fantasies), it encouraged me to be my own lover in every sense of the word.

How better to practise letting go of the State than with myself? How better to be more caring, less controlling, less controlled, than by being a lover to myself?

I want to be clear, here: I'm not suggesting we all just wank our way to revolution. Rather, I'm coming to realise, again and again, that for me to practise anarchy is to care for myself, to listen to myself, to offer compassion to myself. One way of interpreting this is that 'we' should take care of ourselves in order to be more *effective* anarchists: care as a means to an end. This works as far as it goes. I do have more energy to write, to organise events, to participate in meetings the more I take care of myself. This instrumental care seems to me to be less the care of a lover and more the care of a coach or drill sergeant, training myself for revolution with a regime of healthy diet, regular exercise and plenty of rest. The care I want for myself is a means without end, without goals.

Being in touch with myself, touching myself. Letting myself receive the touch, love and appreciation of others. Letting go of the ice shield, the State of disconnection. Being gentle with myself, listening to my body, I learn to feel the pain when my desires are unsatisfied, either in the present or as memories of the past that still come to life. Muscles soften, tears flow. I don't *have* to make it okay – that's what the State does (or tries to do) with its borders and its judgements and its policing (Scott 1998). That's what I do sometimes. That's how I learned to survive. Make it okay so he doesn't get angry. Make it okay so he doesn't hit me. Make it okay so I don't feel the pain. I do not want to smash the State, because I know that I am the State sometimes. It's how I survive. I want to let it go as I develop other ways of relating to myself and the world around me. I can't do that on my own. I need help.

Asking for help is one of the aspects of anarchy I find most difficult to practise. For mutual aid to be truly mutual is to acknowledge vulnerability. Dammit, that's just not how I was raised! And to ask, rather than demand, is to accept that the answer might be 'no'. Hearing and reading feminist criticisms of macho behaviour in anarchist spaces, I know I'm not the only one facing these challenges (e.g. Osterweil 2007; Sullivan 2005, 2007). Stephen Duncombe suggests that this fear of vulnerability haunts 'progressive' politics generally, and, more importantly, can be a source of inspiration:

If we are afraid to publicly recognise and politicise our own desires, how can we hope to speak to those of other people? But if we start to ask the questions of what our needs and desires are, and how a politics might meet them, we just might discover that, lo and behold, *our* needs are the same as *theirs*.

(Duncombe 2007:84–5)

To make myself, as Foucault suggests, more susceptible to pleasure is, it seems to me, to accept my vulnerability, my ability to be wounded. Suddenly, the challenge of radical social transformation, of letting go of the State, sounds an awful lot like how folk might describe their fears of intimacy: they might get hurt. I might get hurt. Being a coach, drill sergeant, judge, policeman or other 'male in the head' (Holland *et al.* 1998), I push myself to ignore my desires, my needs, my pain. Being my own lover, I'm there to give myself compassion, to listen to myself. Being my own lover is an ongoing journey, with no fixed answers or correct practices. Walking, I ask questions. In doing so, I look to philosophy less as an intellectualising anaesthetic, as I sometimes do, and more as an ethos or practice of living (May 2005; McWherter 2004), as both a love of knowledge *and* a knowledge of love (Irigaray 2004). As such, it becomes one of many practices of connection in which I am able to find strength in vulnerability, in flexibility, in openness. Others might be termed spiritual practices: connecting with the rest of earth

through marking the turning of the year, through gardening and gathering wild foods, through taking in the beauty and power of the sea, the forest and the sky, connecting with my embodiment and my capacities for stillness and for motion through swimming, cycling, yoga and chi gung, connecting with my own feelings and desires and those of others through meditation and non-violent communication, accepting the inevitability of death so that I embrace life more fully and with greater appreciation (Batchelor 1998), connecting with other sources of wisdom through the reading of spiritual texts (e.g. Chödrön 2002; Lao Tzu 1997; Starhawk 2005), fantasy novels (e.g. Butler 1993, 2001; Marks 2002; Donaldson 1993; Starhawk 1993) and other stories that offer me different understandings of power and possibilities (Cohn 2007; Le Guin 2009).

I imagine a reader asking, is all of this care of the self meant to be a replacement for action?[8] As a friend reminded me, 'There are women in California who do *nothing but* take care of themselves.' I want to both offer reassurance and to challenge the question. I'll challenge first: where does the emphasis on *action* or being *active* come from? My thoughts turn to a recent visit to the GUM (genito-urinary medicine) clinic for a check-up, where I was stunned by so much, including the consultant's use of the terms active and passive to describe anal sex between men. I said I preferred to use giving and receiving, thinking of those words as less inscribed with power. (She nodded, writing down the words she preferred.) However, they now remind me of a commonly cited passage from the Bible: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). This in turn, takes me back to anal sex and what Michael Warner calls 'bottom shame' and the shame-induced risk-taking for men whose 'masculinity is more closely identified with insertive than with receptive anal sex' (Warner 2000:212). I recognise, for myself, how a prioritisation of *action*, being *active* or an *activist*, is intertwined with a comfort in *giving* rather than receiving, offering care to others more often than accepting care. Again, I am not alone in this (see, e.g., Anonymous 2000; Crisman 1991; starr 2007). In emphasising practices of connection, and in starting with myself, I become more practised in the mutuality of mutual aid. In starting with myself, I reassure you (and me), that I do not end with myself. I cannot, for my self is relational (MacKenzie and Stoljar 2000): simultaneously social and ecological (e.g. Stevens 2009, 2010). Connection does not take me inside myself (i.e. navel gazing) or 'outside myself' (i.e. depression or disassociation); it allows the outside in and the inside out, blurring any supposed border. It's amoeba sex.

Being my own lover *is* action: a form of erotic direct action. In this way, I increase my susceptibility to pleasure, to connection with others; I want to experience the erotic potential of everyday life. Every day. I don't want to wait for 'after the revolution' to feel joy; indeed, perhaps there is no after. No afterlife, only life. And life, I know, is full of erotic potential. I have tasted it.

Notes

1 This essay is dedicated to my fellow workers on the sexual health team and to each of the young people I worked with over those years. This would not have been written without you. I also want to acknowledge conversations with Richard Cleminson, Liz McGregor, Rowan Cobelli, Liz Kingsnorth, Lisa Fannen, Cloudberry McLean, Sian Sullivan, Kristina Nell Weaver, Anthony McCann, Matt Wilson, Ben Franks, Lloyd Miller, Debbie Cowan, Simon Edney, Alex Jackson, Laurie Heckert, Jason Heckert, Helen Moore, Grant Denkinson, Elizabeth Barner, Jane Heckert, Larry Heckert, Rob Teixeira, Joan Robertson, Diggsy Leitch, Michael Gallagher, Ben Tura, Jane Harris, Nicky MacDonald and, of course, Paul Stevens for helping make this essay possible.

2 Following bell hooks (2000), I refer to social movement, rather than maintaining that boundaries can be placed around identifiable 'social movements'.

3 This attitude, a response to fear, changed through a number of events, including organising with a fellow anarchist worker a meeting of tutors (called TAs in North America) to threaten a strike on marking in response to a wage cut for fellow tutors, as well as discovering that others were writing anarchist theory in universities.

4 My father has stopped drinking and retrained as a drug and alcohol counsellor, while Jensen suggests that his has in no way acknowledged the harm he has done.

5 They use the masculine 'guys' purposely here to indicate what I see as the gendered nature of heroics in this case.

6 Anarchist sex education could blur any distinction between prefigurative (Franks 2003; Gordon 2008) or consequentialist ethics (May 1994), which focus on practices that bring about a different (more anarchist) future and an immediatist one focused on experiencing the present differently (e.g. Bey 1991, 1994). Both can apply simultaneously, practising practices relevant to sexual health (again, broadly defined) without necessarily being 'sexual' themselves. Mindfulness, for example, changes one's experience of the present, allowing judgements, thoughts and feelings to be acknowledged and let go of, increasing a sense of connection with oneself. Being deeply present during sex, in my experience, is profoundly pleasurable as well as both self- and other-caring.

7 The pubococcygeus muscle, or PC muscle, links the coccyx (tailbone) with the pubic bone and functions as the floor of the pelvic cavity, supporting the pelvic organs. Kegel exercises, a method for learning to flex and strengthen this muscle, are used to prevent premature ejaculation in men, to improve urinary control and to ease childbirth.

8 I see care of the self as consistent with the central theme of connection, expressed in various ways, throughout anarchist and anarchic politics: as the 'groundless solidarity' and 'affinity of affinities' of anarchism (Day 2005), as the 'politica affectiva' of horizontalism (Sitrin 2006) or the 'affective resistance' of autonomous feminism (Shukaitis, Chapter 3), as well as in the shared joys (Shepard 2009) and pains (Plaw 2005) of nurturing community.

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Poetic interlude 4

MANIFESTO OF A PISSED-OFF FAGGOT #2

J. Fergus Evans
WE'RE HERE

    WE'RE QUEER

    GET USED TO US!

(I repeat)

WE'RE HERE

    WE'RE QUEER

    GET USED TO US!

I repeat …

but they still don't like me on canal street

maybe I'm not pretty enough

a bit too gritty and raw but

I won't be out-foxed by Fox, NBC, CBS or the BBC trying to tell me how

to be more

    me

won't let them sell me back my stake in the gay identity

won't let channel 4 tell me how to look more like a homo and less like a

hobo
do I scare them?

do I disappoint because I might not want

    an appointment at the registry office

    a husband

    2.4

    a 4x4

and I'm not a label whore. I'm just

a whore

maybe I'm not allowed through the doors of your culture club because

I'm more uppity than upwardly mobile—

a mouthy faggot who doesn't know his place

(but can place pieces of poetry in the corners of your heart that wait all

night to detonate

'til you're home tonight

turn off the light

kiss your partner goodnight

and wonder when it is you started living someone else's idea of the

Good Life)
See I'm okay with the grey area don't believe many people fit neatly into society's binaries don't believe you'll EVER see reality on tv
and I don't believe you have to look outside yerself for a sense of

authenticity.
This is a culture war

so I'm fighting back with words

gonna fan the flame of revolution like rockets in yer belly tell you

you can make a contribution to the overthrowing of outdated labels like

homo and hetero

and man, I hope inciting a riot makes you hard

   and horny

'cause when I suck cock it's a fucking revolution.

WILDCRAFT, LOVECRAFT

Helen Moore
When I'd like to surprise my lover

by cooking up a storm,

I relish the moments when I find

our kitchen-cupboards bare –

what else then

but to hare into the fields

and rustle up a salad?
It's so convenient to discover,

rinsed with dew and table-ready,

Dandelions and Sorrels

abundant for gleaning;

or as herbivore of hedgerows,

to browse on young Hawthorn,

pinch tender Nettle tops for soup.
Down by the lardering stream

a patch of Lady's Smock is peppery,

enticing, and the search for Brooklime

leaves me wanting more;

but Jack-by-the-hedge is easy,

brimming green with garlic mustard,

and I'm not poor for taking him.
Maybe the nooks and rides of woods

are most deliciously giving –

on my back a fur of sunlight

as I rootle among the lacy umbels,

tracing down each fragile stem

to unearth a brown-skinned Pignut;

or, taking flight with my small cargo,

how the Elders offer flowery desserts?
In my grandmother's store I recall

jars swimming with the ruby flesh of Rosehips,

and the thirteen moons of pickled eggs.

Along their rows I'd count my lineage

back to those shape-shifting Hare-women –

how from fields and hedgerows

they fed and nurtured, laid out the dead;

and the canny ways of which their daughters

were too long dispossessed.
And now to love's cuisine my roots

are reaching, thriving in the rains

of pleasure's kiss – in serving wilderness

we taste our freedom, come alive

to our most earthy flavours.

Chapter 9

Sexuality issues in the Czech anarchist movement[1]

Marta Kolářová

Introduction

Czech anarchism and sexuality – is this really an issue? Sexuality has only been minimally discussed in the Czech anarchist movement in comparison to other axes of inequality such as class, race or, recently, gender. Activists dealing with sexuality issues within anarchism have not been very visible; neither are there many of them. In addition, the historical and academic pieces on Czech anarchism (Slačálek 2002; Tomek and Slačálek 2006) do not address sexuality at all. In order to analyse this lack, I draw together some stories from the scant literature that exists. I see the connection between anarchism and sexuality in various ways – this connection implies both practice and reflection, intertwined with the issues and activism that surround both. In practice, the largely heterosexual relations in the Czech anarchist movement shape the understandings and discussions (or lack thereof) of sexuality.

Daphne (2006) describes the limited discussion of sexuality issues in the People's Global Action meeting in Lyon. According to her there is a lack of knowledge among radicals about what heterosexism is, even though people in these circles consider themselves open-minded and 'homo-friendly'. This attitude, however, makes heterosexual dominance invisible. The Czech anarchist movement, I would argue, has not even reached this stage of discussion yet.

Anarchist discourse in former Czechoslovakia and subsequently in the Czech Republic has not focused on the intersections between different kinds of inequality. The new wave of anarchism, starting in the early 1990s, addressed mostly class issues, later race (antifascism) and gender (anarcho-feminism). There has never been any specific organisation or magazine dealing with sexuality issues, and general anarchist magazines have rarely covered sexuality. Only very recently, since 2004, have sexuality, queer, LGBT and free love issues been discussed; and only in some fora and by some activists, mostly anarcho-feminists. This includes, notably, the appearance of one zine made by punk anarcho-feminist lesbians. Since 2008, some anarchists and anarcho-feminists have participated in new events organised by LGBT activists, including annual Queer Parades.

In this chapter I discuss why issues of sexuality were marginalised in Czech anarchism and I explore who raises sexuality issues, how the discourse on sexuality is shaped, what activities around sexuality issues take place and the relationship with LGBT movements. This piece is mainly empirical, drawing on my ethnographic study including long-term participant observation (2001–3), interviews with activists (Kolářová 2004) and an analysis of the movement's media (from 2000 to 2006).[2] The chapter aims to be a contribution towards raising these issues in the movement and thus strengthening the movement's theoretical and practical impact.

This issue needs to be seen in the historical context of the evolution of the Czech anarchist, feminist, LGBT and other social movements, their non-existence under state socialism and their development since the early 1990s within an Eastern European context. The Czech Republic is quite liberal, but Poland is much more restrictive, for instance, on the availability of contraceptives. Despite this liberalism, however, the queer movement has been developing rather slowly and is not connected with radical politics or anarchism in the Czech Republic.

Sexual relations in the Czech anarchist subculture

The politics of the anarchist movement are influenced by personal and intimate relationships; the Czech anarchist movement is a small community and activists know each other well. There is a low level of participation by women and an absence or invisibility of homosexual relations in

the subculture.

Women usually have partners from the movement and have a wider choice than men given the gender disparity among activists. Men, then, have to choose among non-activists. They often bring their partners into the movement and this works as one method for the recruitment of women (Kolářová 2004). By the same token, relationships not only facilitate political activity but can also cause problems, especially within an organisation. For a woman, when she comes alone and single to an organisation, it can be difficult to participate: 'It is not really easy, when a woman comes to a meeting where two-thirds of people are men and they start to hit on her, for her not to take it personally' (Andrej, anarchist, male, quoted in Kolářová 2004:9).

The anarchist movement in its praxis has been quite male dominated and recently influenced by a skinhead subculture adopted mainly by antifascists. Women can be discouraged from entering or staying in the movement by the activities or culture of some groups or the movement as a whole because of the role of violence within it. Militant antifascist groups using physical confrontation have very few women members. These organisations are said to have a 'macho image' that associates the cult of violence and roughness with men:

These organisations attract one type of person. If you look at them, they all look the same – young men with shaved heads. They claim to have an anarcho-communist programme that should be open for everyone, but it does not seem to be the most attractive thing for those entering. It is something else; it is the macho image of those people, the culture of the organization.

(Ruda, anarchist, male, quoted in Kolářová 2004:8)

We can find aggressive, tough and rowdy macho behaviour in anti-fascist groups where women cannot participate at all.

(Kenský 2002:13)

This macho image can be the reason why women do not enter the movement, or these groups in particular. While these forms of masculinity might also serve to attract some women, it seems that men in these groups do not want to accept them because of their gender. Women who eventually enter these groups are not allowed by men to express themselves; they are discouraged and may leave the group (Kolářová 2004). Also, homosexual people could feel the same way. Although some gay men could be attracted to a macho image (gay skins are found in some countries, but not in the Czech Republic), some individuals in the male groups behave in homophobic ways and make jokes about homosexuals. This behaviour, by no means practised by everyone, has not always been challenged and critiqued.

In this environment, it would be very difficult for gay people to come out. Homo/bisexual voices are not heard in the movement. From my long participation in the movement, exclusively heterosexual relationships are the only ones that are visible. Of course, there might be people who are homosexual or bisexual but who do not come out in the anarchist movement. For lesbians it would be difficult because feminists are already criticised and looked at askance in the movement by some antifascists who do not accept any critique of sexism. In general, in Czech society feminists are stigmatised and equated with lesbians. In comparison with what I have observed in the West (East Coast USA and some parts of the UK) it seems that the Czech anarchist movement constitutes a world of rather narrow displays of femininity and masculinity. Femininity is (maybe because of the fear of being criticised) defined quite traditionally, with respect to image especially (long hair, make-up, etc.). Masculinity was for many years influenced by skinhead images and behaviour as tough men and fighters connected with heterosexuality.

However, some people do question these gender norms, at least in a playful way and on some specific occasions. In certain circumstances, such as during parties or talks, some anarchist men like to dress as women (especially in pink after the wave of pink and silver activism), and sometimes a few women dress as men, as a performance. It is a marginal activity, but it seems to show the need for transgressing gender and sexuality norms.

Free love and polyamory in the Czech anarchist movement

Polyamory can be defined as a practice of having more than one intimate relationship and/or loving more than one person at the same time. All the partners involved should be aware of this situation. The word polyamory is not known in the Czech Republic and Czechs still use the term 'free love', or sometimes 'open relationships'. The evolution of these notions is interesting. The old concept of free love that Czechs know from Emma Goldman (1969) is still used, because Czech anarchism has not addressed sexuality issues and has not followed the

development of new terms. While, for instance, 'gender' is a new and widely used concept in Czech society, and in the anarchist movement, polyamory has not been taken up in the same way.

Based on interviews, observation and discussion, polyamory or the practice of free love serves as more of a short-term phase between serial monogamous relationships than as a longer term alternative. When people in the movement have dated more than one person at the same time, it has usually been temporarily. Anarchists practising polyamory have been criticised by others. This form of social control in the movement has pushed multiple relationships to dissolve and shamed individuals into returning to monogamy. The Czech anarchist movement is rather conservative in this sense and short-term serial relationships are deemed more acceptable. This is subject to the all-too-common gendered double standard. When a man has more relationships, people say, 'Oh, he has another girl,' but about women they would say, 'She sleeps with everyone' (see e.g. *Bloody Mary*, no. 1 for a critique).

If we consider the old anarchist notion of 'free love' meaning relationships outside marriage and unregulated by the state or church, these predominate in the movement. Generally, Czech anarchists consider marriage to be an anachronism and people usually do not get married, even couples with children. Free love, in this sense, is not particularly exceptional in contemporary Czech society. This phenomenon, however, was very uncommon under state socialism, when very young people (between the ages of 18 and 20) got married, often as a strategic move for benefits or housing. Since the early 1990s cohabitation has become more common. Also, due to state socialism, there was never a strong hippy subculture or a sexual revolution as in the West. Sexual freedom came slowly during socialism, when sex and conjugal infidelity were an important part of leisure time, which people could not devote to study, travelling or consumption.

I would now like to present an analysis of a discussion on sexuality that I organised in Prague's anarchist info café and later on the website of the Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation in spring 2005 (www.csaf.cz, September 2005; a report on the discussion is available in Kolářová 2005). The whole discussion was influenced by the fact that we were not familiar with the concept of polyamory, and there was a lack of general clarity in the debates. I started the discussion with a short talk about the development of the term 'free love'. Then I asked the participants (about thirty people) what free love meant to them today. Is it a meaningful concept? Does it mean to have more partners, promiscuity, as it seems to be understood by most? Can free love be more free when we already have (in euro-American society) sexual freedom, premarital sex, cohabitation, divorce and contraception? How does free love differ for men and women? To what extent it is about freedom and about responsibility (to partner/s and children)? How can jealousy be dealt with? Is it possible to love more than one person at the same time? And people of the same and the opposite sex? Is the notion of free love today still associated with social change when the sexual revolution is already under way? How is free love defined and what experience have you had of it?

In the discussion, the biggest problem was in defining free love. The people debating did not find one definition to agree on. Some argued that free love meant more partners and related it to promiscuity. For others, free love was considered to consist of more relationships, not only in the sexual but also in the emotional sense. Other people understood free love as one relationship but freed from possessive ties to the other person and from the influence of state institutions. Free love was based on openness about other relationships. Infidelity could not be considered a part of free love, because partners should communicate about their feelings and need for other partner/s. Mostly, the question of whether free love meant having more partners was discussed. Practical issues such as timing (how to be with more partners together) or housing (when the contemporary housing situation in the Czech Republic is not disposed towards community living) were discussed. For many, a cohabiting partner had priority over others; this hierarchy of relationships was also discussed. One relationship is usually considered more important and the others are seen as second-class relationships because the input of energy and time into them is less. Some people said they did not mind their partner having other relationships, but they wanted him or her to be with them when they needed them.

Many questions remained unanswered. What do you do if some of the partners do not like

each other? Or when someone has a serious problem, how much time should a person devote to him/her and to the others? Or what to do when one partner wants free love and the other does not. How does a relationship change from monogamy to free love? And so on. Only a few people spoke from their very limited experiences of free love; their desires for non-monogamy were not understood or tolerated by their partners, so these relationships were only short term.

Differences between men and women were also discussed. Some argued that there is no difference regarding gender. One participant said, 'Men sometimes think that free love is great, but when their girlfriend practises it they are not able to deal with it.' Women, in particular, said that there is still double standard: a man with several girlfriends is successful, while a woman behaving similarly is a slut. The influence of the socialisation of men to be less emotional in relations was also emphasised.

The issue of children was addressed specifically. According to one participant free love is part of the parents' lifestyle and they should not change it because of their children, as they do not change other things. The biggest problem was seen to be the prejudices of the wider society, which does not accept free love. Childrearing in free communal partnerships was suggested. Some said that traumatic experiences from a divorce, fathers leaving the family or violence in the family were much worse for children than a functioning relationship with more than one partner. However, some people expressed prejudice against childrearing in either open relationships or same-sex relationships.

Homosexual experience as such was not discussed because the participants considered themselves to be heterosexual. However, potential bisexual relations in free love were considered. More women than men said that their partners would mind if they started a relationship with someone of the same sex. On other occasions outside this discussion it is possible to hear discussion about homosexual marriage (which has not been addressed by Czech anarchists at all). Most asked, 'Why do they want it when marriage itself is a bad institution?'

Participants in the debate pointed out that we are all influenced by society, the media and family education to believe that the ideal is a monogamous heterosexual relationship and the nuclear family. Contrariwise, we can see under the surface that these ideals do not work – promiscuity in society is very common. Participants criticised Czech society as hypocritical because of the frequency with which marriages or other supposedly monogamous relationships are associated with concealed infidelity. As an alternative to the patriarchal nuclear family the participants did not suggest the accumulation of partners as souvenirs, but the total removal of taboos in matters of love. Compared to existing relationships based on possessiveness, free love can have a subversive role in society. New definitions of erotics, the eradication of the beauty myth and sexual abuse, and autonomous communities based on free love and communal childrearing were all proposed. Participants also acknowledged that these alternative projects of partnerships and parenthood are influenced by the deeply embedded feelings of jealousy, betrayal and possessiveness.

In the discussion there was a strong emphasis on freedom and emancipation from negative morality. For instance, one man said:

I understand free love as my need. As I can never know who I will desire or fall in love with, I am not interested in listening to some moralistic bullshit about what I can or cannot do. This is my rebellion against the dictatorship of capital and its destructive possessive relationships.

(quoted in Kolářová 2005)

Others argued against this, understanding free love as being too individualistic, consumerist and 'bourgeois', meaning having as much as you can. Free love borders on selfishness and does not include responsibility.

Some said that we were talking about freedom most of the time, but another important aspect of anarchism was not being taken into the account – equality. Why is free and equal love not talked about? Free love without equality and responsibility is bad; it is only hedonism and extreme individualism. As we said before, in polyamorous relationships hierarchies arise and it is difficult to speak about equality. Crucially, gender inequalities in free love are far from resolved.

Sexuality in Czech anarchist and anarcho-feminist discourses

In the primary Eastern European anarchist forum, the magazine *Abolishing the Borders from Below*, there are efforts to connect the analysis of intersections of inequality based on class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and so on. *Abolishing the Borders from Below* pays attention specifically to LGBT communities, including reports from Pride marches in Russia, Romania and Poland. These parades are not organised by anarchists, but anarchists participate in and support these struggles. LGBT activists have a difficult position in these countries. Usually, Gay Pride is illegal, prohibited by the authorities (e.g. in Moscow and Bucharest). Even if the marches happen illegally, they are attacked by the police and by neo-Nazis: 'In the Serbian gay pride a few years ago fascist and religious fanatics viciously beat up the participants on the march' (Anonymous 2006:6–7). As a reaction to that, anarchists struggling against fascism have made contact with LGBT activists. This has been most successful in Poland, where the Black Bloc supports the LGBT parades.

In contrast, in the Czech anarchist movement there was no discussion or mention of supporting LGBT movements and their struggle until 2008. Even though Czech homosexuals and transgendered people were attacked by neo-Nazi skinheads, anarchists were usually silent on this issue.[3] From the beginning of the 1990s up to 2004, homosexuality was not an issue for the Czech (non-feminist) anarchist media. I have found only two mentions of sexuality and homosexuality was not addressed in either. The first of these articles appeared as 'Anarchism and Sex' in the biggest anarchist magazine, *A-kontra* (1, 2003). It was an article translated from the British and Irish magazine *Organise!* (no. 59, winter 2002), and no original Czech discussion on this issue has yet occurred in the anarchist press. The second was an interview with a woman from the International Union of Sex Workers in *Alarm*, on the website of the former Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists. This was also a translation and there was no information about the Czech situation.

The Czech anarchist movement had for a long time discussed mostly class and race inequalities, while gender and sexuality issues were neglected (Kolářová 2004). In recent years, there have been several attempts to put gender issues on to the agenda. The most important of these were the creation of an *Anarcho-feminist group* in autumn 2000 and *Bloody Mary* – a riot grrrl zine founded in Prague in spring 2000. While Czech anarcho-feminists have focused on connecting gender, race and sexual orientation in their speeches, they rarely cooperate with lesbian feminists or Roma women activists. Problematic as this may be, anarcho-feminists have been the only anarchist subjects who have started to pay attention to sexuality issues. The *Anarcho-feminist group* organised two discussions on constructing sexuality, including homosexuality issues, in 2004 and started to address homosexuality in their magazine *Přímá cesta* (Direct way) in 2005. Recently, some of these activists participated in organising Queer Parades together with LGBT activists.

Bloody Mary is a riot grrrl, anarcho-feminist magazine focusing on women's issues, such as women and globalisation, women's poverty, abortion, women in subcultures, prostitution, menstruation and so on. The magazine also covers alternative culture and publishes reviews of shows and exhibitions as well as interviews with bands, stories and poems. The magazine's stance is critical of men's sexist behaviour within the punk and anarchist movement. For example, it criticised double standards in anarcho-punk subcultures where punk girls are expected to sleep with anyone because punk style means to have sex without commitments. Each issue of *Bloody Mary* is devoted to a particular topic. Those issues related to sexuality were no. 3 (2000) on abortion, sterilisation and birth control; no. 7 (2002) on menstruation; and no. 8 (2003) on prostitution. Sexuality is understood as part of women's issues, such as health, masturbation and pornography, more than in the sense of the relationships between men and women. However, in a *Bloody Mary* special issue on sexuality (no. 10, 2005) the editorial discusses the connection between gender and sexuality, and particularly addresses homosexuality and transgender issues. Inside the zine there is an interview with a lesbian activist, but no connection with anarchism or feminism is made. Issue no. 11 published an interview with an Italian lesbian activist of colour. Recently, *Bloody Mary* started to focus on queer issues, and the collective organised a festival, Gender Fuck Fest, in October 2009 that was defined as a queer event. The fifteenth issue of the zine presents several reflections on this action and interviews with queer bands and activists. The organisers were inspired by Ladyfests in other countries, mostly in Germany, but wanted their action to be less 'ladylike'.

They had a motto for the festival: 'Svoje pohlaví nechte doma' (Leave your sex/gender at home). The participants could listen to music by feminist, queer or punk bands – for instance the queer band Rebis from Germany – could learn how to make sex toys, p-mates[4] or DIY fashion pieces in several workshops, could discuss issues of heteronormativity, queer activities, or sexual violence in the anarchist movement, and see theatre performances and exhibitions of feminist, lesbian and queer zines. Gender Fuck Fest was a unique event in the Czech Republic, especially in linking alternative culture with radical queer and feminist politics.

The magazine *Přímá cesta*, published by the anarcho-feminist group, also focuses each issue on a particular topic, for instance on the family and the state, pornography and gender and language. *Přímá cesta* also contains theoretical essays on anarcho-feminism and articles about the history of the labour movement regarding the condition of women. The eighth issue from 2005 was titled 'Let's dissolve sexual norms'. In the editorial of this issue (p. 2) homosexuality and heterosexuality are understood not as natural, from birth, but as socially constructed. Particularly unusually for a Czech anarchist publication, it also addresses the politics of transgender identities. The editors want to transgress gendered and sexualised norms as a part of a broader anarchist project of challenging norms. They present information about homosexual movements in other countries as these are largely unknown in the Czech Republic. They sympathise with the radical wing of LGBT or queer movements abroad who also focus on other systems of oppression such as sexism, capitalism and racism. They are also crititical of more reformist LGBT movements for being too consumerist, commercial and focused on fashion. The magazine also includes writing about the definition of homophobia (without specifically referring to Czech society), about paedophilia, personal experience with rape and several pieces on sexual education in Czech primary schools. Finally, there is an interview with a fifteen-year-old gay man who seems to feel fine coming out and does not feel any discrimination from his friends and acquaintances, who are very tolerant. Before publishing this issue addressing homosexuality, *Přímá cesta* had discussed sexuality only in connection with pornography and abortion.

In 2004, the *Anarcho-feminist group* started to organise summer camps where sex education workshops for children and discussions for adults on sexuality issues, including homosexuality, took place. Also, the group used to organise counter-demonstrations against the rallies of the Pro-Life Movement every year. Anarcho-feminists and other anarchist groups are the only people who criticise and publicly demonstrate their opposition to this right-wing tendency and take a strong pro-choice position in Czech society. Abortion in the Czech Republic is not a contentious issue, however. Abortion was already legal under communism and it has been permitted for more than forty years now. The Czech Republic is different from Western countries, where the right to abortion had to be fought for. However, this cannot be said in general about other post-communist countries, such as Poland. Abortion had been legalised there under the communist regime, but after the fall of state socialism abortion was prohibited once more. Much of Polish women's or feminist activism is focused on this question. In the Czech Republic, it seems, this activity is not central, and the women's movement, apart from anarcho-feminism, does not address it.

Regarding the lack of cooperation between anarcho-feminists and lesbian activists, there are notable exceptions. There was a women-only anarchist group called 'Luna' within the squatter movements, existing from 1995 to 1998. Its focus was on women's rights, animal rights, the environment and pagan issues. It organised demonstrations against right-wing movements and parties and on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The group was also part of a broader platform called 'Women against Racism', where it cooperated with lesbian women's groups. Also, the editorial group of the *Bloody Mary* zine was created predominantly by women and recently they have cooperated with lesbian activists. A few anarcho-feminist activists started to define themselves as queer or came out as bisexual; they also helped to organise Queer Parades, especially in Tábor in 2009.

Homosexual and queer activism in the anarchist movement and cooperation with LGBT activists

As I have shown, it has been very difficult for the anarchist movement to cooperate with LGBT

people and movements. Likewise, cooperation is not very likely from the other side. In the Czech Republic there are no radical LGBT organisations that see links between sexuality and racism or militarism. The Czech Republic only has a moderate, reformist LGBT movement. Until 2008 there was no Gay Pride or any other major public event relating to LGBT liberation, except an annual festival of lesbian culture called 'Apriles' between 1995 and 2003.

Sokolová (2006) points out that Czech society discriminates against LGBT people, so discrimination (and not identity) is what drives activism. In the Czech context, homosexuality was decriminalised in 1961, but only removed from the list of mental illnesses as recently as 1992 (Sokolová 2006). Under the socialist regime the issue was taboo in society and it was discussed largely in terms of medical discourse. The legalisation of registered partnerships and same-sex marriage came in 2006. This legislation was a result of long discussions in the Czech Parliament and pressure from the civil society Gay and Lesbian League. The Czech LGBT movement has a history of being strongly patriarchal and gay male dominated; at the same time, lesbians have been excluded from the heterosexist mainstream women's and feminist movement. Lesbian rights are not considered women's rights, and gender and sexuality issues have been separated from each other. The dominant gender discourse is based on a presumed natural duality of men and women, together with normative notions of femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, the understanding of sexualities and gender identities is highly dichotomised, leaving transgender and bisexual issues even more marginalised (Sokolová 2006).

According to Kotišová and Vampolová (2006), there has never even been any Czech lesbian movement as such, with only a few lesbian activists working in isolation from each other. Lesbian activists have also largely been disconnected (with a few exceptions) from the potential support of the anarchist or anarcho-feminist movement. They have worked alone in order to avoid the stigmatisation of being lesbian and feminists (Kotišová and Vampolová 2006), and also the stigmatisation of cooperating with anarchists or antifascists, who are frequently represented as extremists by the media.

In the case of transgender people, cooperation is even less likely. According to Spencerová, transgender people do not want to be visible politically at all. They do not want to deal with other political issues or even with transgender issues publicly. Transsexuals want to pass as 'normal' people and are mostly politically conservative (Spencerová 2006). It is highly improbable that they would enter or cooperate with the anarchist movement. While some transgender people have been attacked by neo-Nazi skinheads, they have not been drawn to join anarchist or antifascist struggles against fascism.

Because of the communist regime there has not been any second wave feminist movement in which feminists have been connected with lesbian women or transgender people as in Western countries. The social movements from below started after the fall of communism, and the early 1990s were significant as a new beginning for the anarchist, feminist and LGBT movements. These movements, even though they are not very strong and none of them has a large membership, still have very little contact with each other. Similarly, their political analyses tend to be separate, with none of them focusing on the intersections of inequalities such as class, race, gender, sexuality, age, disability and so on.

The situation changed in 2008 when the Queer Parade, as a public demonstration of visibility of the LGBT community, started to take place in Brno. An event composed of a march and workshops, exhibitions, theatre performances and discussions has been organised annually: in 2009 in Tábor, a small town in southern Czech Republic, and in 2010 in Brno, attracting hundreds of participants. It was organised by LGBT grassroots activists together with some local gender activists, and, especially in Tábor, some anarcho-feminists helped with the organisation. The events were supported by the Minister for Human Rights, local politicians and some gay celebrities, such as the tennis player Martina Navrátilová. This action was strongly opposed by Czech nationalist and neo-Nazi movements, with huge banners saying 'No Way for Gays, No Tolerance for Deviants' and so on, and the Deělnická strana (Workers' Party – an extreme right-wing nationalist group, which was prohibited by the highest Czech court in 2010) held counter-meetings against homosexuals. As the first Queer Parade (including some anarchists who participated in the march) was attacked by neo-Nazis, the next year in Tábor a group of anarchists (mostly from the collective Kolektivně proti kapitálu

[Collectively against capital] and antifascists) organised security guards to protect the parade. So, as in other Eastern European countries, the opposition against queer activities by nationalist and neo-Nazi movements has brought anarchists and antifascists together with LGBT activists.

The anarcho-feminist lesbian zine *Houpačka*

The lack of an intersectional approach in Czech anarchism has changed recently, with one project connecting multiple issues. *Houpačka* (Seesaw) is a zine created by two young anarcho-feminist lesbian women (and later more people) from a town in the northern part of the Czech Republic. They started in autumn 2005 and have published five issues. While homosexuality or transgender issues have been part of the zine since the third issue, their most important focus is women's issues. They write against discrimination, sexual harassment, sexist culture, domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, including rape.

In addition to their lesbian and feminist politics, they claim an alliance with anarchism, antifascism and the punk subculture. They strongly oppose racism, and the rise of the local neo-Nazi movement particularly. Besides that, they deal with environmental issues, animal rights, anti-election campaigns and consumer culture. While the zine is not theoretical or very information oriented, the editors present their opinions on a broad range of issues. They deal particularly with local issues and problems of everyday life, but in the context of broader politics or hierarchies in society (for instance anorexia amongst their friends at school). Their feminism is not aggressively targeted against men, but they demand that men change their behaviour towards women. They present real stories of violence against women and domestic violence from people around them and provide contact details of women's non-governmental organisations that help survivors of violence and abuse. They also think that women should speak up against violence and harassment and should unite and act in solidarity. Drawing on their experience, they show how to deal with these problems in everyday life. For example, they have reported how one of them supported some women who were harassed or how women or girls can prevent rape in toilets[5] in bars by going in groups, not alone. They comment upon their interaction with chauvinist men in pubs and bars who sexually harass young punk women, and who hate lesbians. They express anger at being criticised for their unconventional style and image, for wearing men's clothing styles and no make-up.

Since issue no. 3 (spring 2006), they have openly expressed their homosexuality in poems, stories and essays. For instance, they speak about stereotypes that their acquaintances tend to rehearse, for example that in a lesbian couple there has to be one dominant and one submissive woman. For them, the reality is very different: 'One of the reasons I became a lesbian is your [macho men's] dominance over women, which really makes me sick' (Zdendule 2006).

In this issue, they repeated a story about the question of registered partnerships, which were legalised in 2006 in the Czech Republic. The young women told the story of how they had gone to a demonstration in support of legalised partnerships in Prague, thinking it had been organised by some gay and lesbian organisation. Not many people participated and the demonstration was uneventful. To liven things up, they started to drum and sing 'free vaginas' and the organisers distanced themselves. Finally, they learned that the demonstration was organised by a governmental party, the social democrats, but they carried no leaflets or banners with their name. The girls understood the activity of the social democrats as completely opportunistic, in order to gain votes from the homosexual community, as this issue was not supported by other parties and several times the proposed legislation had been rejected by Parliament.

I have interviewed the woman who initiated the *Houpačka* project. She answered the question 'What comes to your mind when anarchism and sexuality are connected?' as follows: 'First, I define and present myself as an anarchist. Considering the fact that I am a lesbian, so the issue of sexuality affects me too.' She understands anarchism in terms of free choice, which is not possible in sexuality. It is possible to choose a partner, but not the sex of the partner. Homosexuality is a given according to her and she cannot have sex with men. She defines herself primarily as an anarchist and feminist. However, she prefers to interact with different

people, not only with anarchists who have the same opinion. Besides, she criticises local anarchists for being conservative:

In the small town where I live, I meet anarchists who have very conservative attitudes. They are scared of gay men. They behave arrogantly, as if heterosexuality was a privilege. Maybe they feel when they talk to me that people would see them as gay. Sometimes I found that they made stupid comments when introducing their partner to me. They were afraid that I would date her. I would not expect something like that from anarchists.

(email interview, 2006)

Because of her evident punk look, she provokes discussion in various places. She mentioned struggles at work, where she defended a colleague who was threatened with being paid a lower wage by their employer. She speaks about the severe homophobic behaviour of people around her; she has found that people use the word 'lesbian' as a curse or an insult. However, she feels they changed once she explained her identity and stance.

She also openly expresses her antifascist attitude, because of which she has had serious problems. Known for her opinions and strong criticism of neo-Nazi skinheads in local pubs, she has been physically attacked, knocked to the ground, beaten and kicked by a group of fascist men several times. They also burgled her and smashed up her house, stole her money and tore her anti-fascist patches off her clothes. In the locality, she and her girlfriend are the only ones who stand up against neo-Nazism. Local punks and anarchists are afraid of opposing the neo-Nazis.

After the attacks, her friends contacted people from antifascist organisations in Prague and nearby, but they were quite reluctant to help because of her specific case. It is unusual for a young woman to be attacked by neo-Nazis, so antifascists were not really prepared for this. The situation may also be affected by the fact that she is openly feminist and lesbian.

Although she is lesbian and defends LGBT people, she is not interested in participating in the LGBT community. She does not feel that her sexual orientation is a basis for friendship with members of this community. They have a different lifestyle and interests. She also does not cooperate with them politically, because she is not interested in the struggle for legislation (such as same-sex marriage and adoption rights). Now that the registered partnership law has been passed, she thinks it is even more difficult for gays and lesbians to get married in a small town or village given levels of rural homophobia. She does not accept the institution of marriage. She does not even think that LGBT people should be understood like the majority heterosexual community because they are different. She feels the gay community is not interested in women's issues, is too macho and too focused on appearance. Instead of sexuality issues, she is more politically interested in the question of violence against women. She is concerned that very few lesbians consider themselves feminists.

Conclusion

Sexuality issues have been marginal for the Czech anarchist movement and, until recently, LGBT people have been absent or silenced in broader Czech society. Since the early 1990s, the anarchist movement has been male dominated and primarily heterosexual. Also, there is a general lack of cooperation between anarchists and gay or queer activists, with the exception of anarcho-feminist activists working with lesbian activists or participating more recently in Queer Parades. The lack of connection between LGBT and anarchist movements is also affected by the fragmentation of women's and LGBT movements and their fear of anarchism as extremism. There appears to be little interest among LGBT people in broadening their activities beyond sexuality issues to a wider radical politics.

With respect to anarchism, however, the situation has started to change recently. Anarcho-feminists have begun to pay more attention to sexuality, and lesbian and gay issues in particular. A specific anarcho-feminist punk lesbian zine has appeared. The *Bloody Mary* collective organised a queer cultural festival and some other anarcho-feminists became involved in the LGBT community's Queer Parades. These people connect queer, feminism and anarchism.

The struggle against neo-Nazism is an obvious potential point for the anarchist movement and LGBT activists to meet, because they are both objects of neo-Nazi hatred. The active anarchist and antifascist presence in Queer Parades recently has shown that these separate movements can cooperate as part of a widening circle of activist movements.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Richard Cleminson, Jamie Heckert, Ondřej Slačálek, Dita Jahodová and Michal Tulík for their comments on drafts of this essay.
2 This chapter is based on research material collected up to the year 2006. Since then there has been some development of this issue that I try to reflect on here, drawing on my participant observation and internet sources.
3 There is one exception: the small counter-demonstration organised by the editorial group of *A-kontra* in Karlovy Vary in 2000 against the demonstration of neo-Nazis who protested against a gay and lesbian action. More recently, anarchists have started to participate in Queer Parades and organised security guards to protect the marches.
4 A female portable urinating device that allows women to urinate standing up.
5 It is not a very common form of violence, though.

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Chapter 10

Amateurism and anarchism in the creation of autonomous queer spaces

Gavin Brown

Over the last two decades, geographers, anthropologists and architectural theorists have been writing about gay and queer space. With the exception of a body of work on cruising and public sex sites (Bell 2001; Binnie 2001; Turner 2003) and a few pieces on lesbian social networks constituted through domestic spaces (Peace 2001; Valentine 1993), most of this work has focused on gay gentrification and issues relating to the mainstream commercial gay scene (Knopp 1992; Nast 2002; Quilley 1997). In contrast, I have spent several years participating in, researching and writing about queer sites that exist outside capitalist social relations (or, at least, attempt to do so).[1] The Anarchism and Sexuality conference from which this book arises offered me the opportunity to present an intellectual analysis of these sites in front of an audience I knew would be unlike the usual audiences I speak to at academic conferences, queer or otherwise; it would include many people who would be familiar with many of the sites I was speaking about, would have participated in them and might have helped initiate and organise them. I seldom get very nervous before giving a conference paper, but this conference, despite the organisers' conscious attempts to foster a supportive environment, was an exception. I feared I would be exposed for over-intellectualising the project of claiming queer autonomy and worried how the more 'activist' elements of the audience might react to my attempt to uncover impulses towards autonomy in a range of spaces beyond activist circuits. I need not have worried. The audience engaged enthusiastically and supportively with my ideas and the discussion that followed the two papers in our session on queer autonomous spaces was by far the most engaged and inclusive discussion I have experienced at an academic conference in the last decade. I have attempted to include and reflect upon many issues raised in that discussion as I have expanded my paper into the current book chapter.

This chapter, then, is about experiments in the creation and reclamation of autonomous queer spaces. In the pages that follow, I explore those spaces that are created by self-identified activists inspired by anarchist ideals, such as the international Queeruption gatherings, fund-raising benefit parties and queer interventions in the spectacles of gay consumption. These spaces are strategically important. However, I want to complicate the discussion a little by also thinking about events and moments where other forms of queer autonomy emerge (often without any direct frame of reference to anarchist ideas or autonomous political movements). These other queer spaces that I consider range from do-it-yourself club nights that exist on the fringes of the mainstream commercial scene, to spiritual gatherings and self-organised resistance to the neglect and erasure of non-commercial public sex environments that serve as a form of (predominantly male-focused) queer commons (Brown 2009). For me, these spaces, with all of their contradictions, are also important because they offer glimpses of what a queerer life could be like in other circumstances.

Queer autonomous geographies

Before I go any further, I should make clear that 'queer', as I am using it here, is more than simply an umbrella term for all those who are 'othered' by normative heterosexuality. It is more than a synonym for any of the variety of acronyms made up from identity categories (e.g. 'LGBT'). Indeed, 'queer', in many of the spaces I am thinking about, is as opposed to homonormativity as it is to heteronormativity. Queer opposes and contests the complacent politics of mainstream gay politicians who actively work to win gay people's compliance with a depoliticised culture based on domesticity and privatised consumption. Queer celebrates gender and sexual fluidity and consciously blurs binaries. It is more of a process of trying to put into practice a set of ethical modes of engagement with sexual and gender difference than a simple identity category. As Jamie Heckert (2004) has suggested, a truly radical politics of

sexuality must move beyond simple transgression and incorporate its ethical goals (for example co-operative, non-hierarchical, sex-positive relationships) into its mode of operation.

The queer autonomous spaces that I discuss in this chapter are attempts to create room for these ethics to be put into practice – indeed, in finding ways of creating these spaces, participants are engaged in a process of putting such ethics into practice. In their recent attempts to theorise the geographies of a range of experiments in social autonomy (e.g. social centres, convergence spaces and intentional communities), Jenny Pickerill and Paul Chatterton have articulated that these are '[s]paces where people desire to constitute non-capitalist, egalitarian and solidaristic forms of political, social and economic organization through a combination of resistance and creation' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:730).

This constellation of sites offers small-scale workable alternatives to wage labour, capitalist consumption and representative democracy. Like Castoriadis (1991), the authors stress that autonomy is a collective process, created and sustained through reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations with other participants (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:733), where the tensions between individual freedom and collective self-rule are continually negotiated in practice. As such, autonomy is always incomplete, and in the process of building autonomous spaces participants must continually negotiate and confront tensions between moments of autonomy and alienated dependence on hierarchical structures: 'Autonomous spaces are an incomplete terrain where daily struggles are made and remade, both symbolically and materially, and where people live by their beliefs and face contradictions from living between worlds – the actually existing and the hoped for' (ibid.: 736–7).

Claiming autonomy and creating spaces where it can be exercised is a relational process – it is deeply contextual and is shaped by the time and place in which the experiment takes place, as well as the circumstances of the people involved (Brown and Pickerill 2009). Autonomy is not an object that can be possessed, only a process that can be worked towards in conjunction with others. Increasingly, those others may not simply be the people that are present in the physical location where autonomy is being built. Complex spatial and temporal networks exist between those engaged in the creation of autonomous experiments. Previous experiments are remembered and their lessons built upon, whilst translocal solidarity networks help experimental methods travel from one location to another across the globe (Olesen 2005). As I shall suggest later in this chapter (see p. 217), sometimes these lessons get lost in translation, when attempts are made to replicate experiments in their entirety without taking into account the specifics of the new location in which they are being enacted. However, what it is important to remember, and what is at the core of my exploration of autonomous tendencies that exist outside radical queer activist networks, is that because autonomy is an ongoing process constructed through contextual practices 'no clear boundaries between autonomous and non-autonomous processes and space exist' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:737). The impulse towards autonomy is not the sole possession of radical activists and can be found anywhere people attempt to take control of their own lives and create what they desire for themselves rather than relying on others to deliver it for them. The journey towards autonomy becomes an end in itself. The process of working with the resources that are to hand at the time, and without deference towards those claiming positions of authority, can be more important than whether the end goal is ever achieved or not.

The queer autonomous spaces and experiments described in this chapter are important because they offer room for sexual dissidents and gender outlaws to exist on their own terms. Increasingly, gay life in the metropolitan centres of the Global North has become saturated by the commodity. Through an engagement with the commercial gay scene, people consume products and experiences that confirm their identity as 'gay'. Consequently people no longer relate to each other as active participants in the creation of society, but as the owners (or not) of things that are divorced from the processes by which they came into being. The social relations of production, of 'doing', are converted into 'being' (in this case, *being gay*). This is the essence of capitalism: the separating of people from their own doing (Holloway 2002). The queer autonomous spaces described here offer some respite from capitalist social relations and attempt to create spaces where sexuality is not reduced to the acquisition of commodities that have been separated from the conditions of their production, and the experiences of those that produced them. In queer autonomous spaces, sexuality is honoured, questioned

and practised differently. More than this, those who are involved in the creation of these spaces have not relied on others, claiming positions of authority and power, to supply alternative spaces for them. In contrast to the experience of life on the receiving end of 'power-over', experiments in queer autonomy are about making modest, low-key attempts to re-engage our 'power-to-do' (ibid.) (which is always part of a social process of doing with others).[2] And so I return to my earlier point that 'queer' within the autonomous queer spaces I am thinking about functions more as a process enacted through the relationships between people, rather than a simple identity category. Queer is an ethical process by which (some) gender outlaws and sexual dissidents strive collectively to reclaim and develop our ability to determine the conditions of *our own* lives. It is about attempting to prefigure in the here and now, through form and process, aspects of life beyond capitalism, and beyond the limiting range of consumable identities that are currently sold to us. Queer social relationships, in this context, are produced through the very process of working collectively to create a less alienated and more empowered space in which to explore a multiplicity of sexual and gendered potentialities. As I hope is clear by now, my conception of 'queer' is very different to most common uses of the term – for me, queer happens through experiments with autonomous practices.

Anarchism, amateurism and the impulse for autonomy

Before exploring some examples of queer autonomous spaces, I want to trace two sets of ideas that influence the processes that shape the creation of these spaces. They are contemporary anarchist praxis and an inclination towards amateur modes of production. Of course, these two modes of thinking overlap and influence each other, but I want to distinguish between sites that are motivated by anarchist-inspired political activism and those that are less directly 'political' and stem from the collective endeavours of groups of like-minded friends who want to try their hands at doing something different. Of course, Kropotkin developed his theories of mutual aid and anarchism on the basis of his observations of everyday, 'amateur' practices. The connections between anarchism and amateurism have existed for a long time.
Uri Gordon (2005, 2007) has suggested that contemporary anarchism has a 'hybrid genealogy' drawing on the revival of anarchist values in a broad intersection of movements (Gordon 2005:9). This is certainly true of the anarcha-queer networks engaged in creating some of the spaces I map in this chapter.[3] They draw influence from the anti-capitalist, direct action politics and non-hierarchical, mutualist ethics of early gay liberation, Greenham Common and the Zapatistas, as well as practical experience from radical feminism, environmental protest, Reclaim the Streets and the social centres movement. These movements encapsulate the 'present-time politics' that Gordon ascribes to contemporary anarchism – a political approach that views revolution as an ongoing process of undermining structures of domination and systemic violence through attempts to implement a libertarian ethos within progressive movements.
Gordon (2005, 2007) notes that in recent decades anarchist resistance has been generalised such that it no longer focuses predominantly on the state and capital, but attempts to expose and undermine all forms of domination operating in society (including racism, patriarchy and heteronormativity). The goal of anarchism has shifted from the abolition and replacement of existing political institutions towards the redefinition of every aspect of social relations. It can be unsettling for many 'activists' to appreciate that this goal is unlikely ever to be achieved completely, for as the structure and functioning of society change, new forms of domination and exclusion might emerge. This should be taken not as an argument against anarchism, but rather as one in favour of an anarchism that pursues an ongoing process of fostering the most egalitarian and anti-oppressive social relations possible. As Emma Goldman recognised long ago, '[a]narchism is not … a theory of the future. It is a living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions … the spirit of revolt, in whatever form, against everything that hinders human growth' (Goldman 1969:63, cited in Ferrell 2001:243).
In this context, prefigurative praxis becomes a central motivating feature for anarchist activism (Franks 2006; Gordon 2007). It creates the conditions in which those who want to can attempt to inhabit, as much as is possible within a racist, patriarchal capitalist society, the social

relations that might underpin the kind of post-capitalist society anarchists aspire to create (Gordon 2005, 2007). In the process of building prefigurative experiments, the desires for personal liberation and social change motivate each other. This in turn promotes anarchism as a culture, a rhizomatic lived experience that pops up everywhere, adapting to specific situations and cultures. Even though it may not be possible to generalise these experiments (at least in the near future), it is still important to promote their development for the lessons and glimpses of freedom they offer. For Jeff Ferrell, 'this practice of spontaneity, experimentation, and playful dis-organization replicates in contemporary cultural space battles the old anarchist strategy of direct action and the notion that an inclusive process, properly unleashed, will find its own progressive direction' (Ferrell 2001:237).

Alongside an expanding repertoire of direct action tactics that confront and undermine oppressive forms of power and domination without reliance on other forms of external authority, a tendency towards *in*direct action (McKay 1998:9) can also be witnessed within the processes of claiming autonomous modes of living. That is the tendency towards disappearance and withdrawal from capitalist society and a refusal to adhere to its norms or engage in the practices that sustain it (Scott 2009).

If, as David Graeber has suggested, anarchism is 'less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule' (Graeber 2002:62), then anarcha-queer praxis is less about reclaiming lesbian and gay identities than about 'exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling' the alienated consumption of sexual identities within neoliberal economies as well as the power differentials produced through these processes.

Contemporary anarchist praxis (queer or otherwise) frequently engages creative and playful modes of resistance and prefiguration, recognising that 'a revolution that reproduces existing arrangements of authority in its execution, that draws on strategies of drudgery and domination, that offers up a new boss the same as the old boss, is no revolution at all' (Ferrell 2001:23). In the spirit of many earlier generations of anarchists, like Emma Goldman and the early IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), and in contrast to too many contemporary mainstream gay politicians, many queers refuse to always act 'respectably' (even as many of us appreciate *being* respected much of the time).

The principle of anarchist direct action *is* do-it-yourself as an ethics of mutual aid (ibid.). Contemporary DIY culture is a form of amateur production that has its roots in punk, as well as earlier grassroots cultural movements such as skiffle[4] (McKay 1998; Spencer 2005). It stems from the desire to make a 'zine reflecting your interests or recording music primarily for yourself and then passing it on to others' (ibid.: 11), using the resources currently available to you to cross the boundary between consumer and producer. Participants in this scene tend not to be 'fixated with the promise of money, they are people who want to do something just to see it happen' (Michal Cupid, quoted in ibid.: 11). More than this, they engage in a process of community and alliance building forged through the distribution and publicity networks that they create for their DIY events and products.

George McKay has described these modes of self-production as the 'cultural politics of autonomy' and as practising 'an intuitive liberal anarchism' (McKay (1998:23, 3). He also acknowledges that there are uncomfortable parallels between the rhetoric of do-it-yourself self-empowerment and the centrality of the individual in aspects of neoliberal ideology (ibid.: 19). Against this concern, I would stress that a key difference can be found in the reciprocal relationships (of mutual aid) and non-hierarchical forms of organisation and distribution found within these networks, alongside a host of other ethical commitments to both anti-oppressive practices and the fostering of equality, empowerment and care (for the human and non-human worlds). It is these ethical commitments that separate DIY cultural networks from many other forms of amateur production. Nevertheless, amateur endeavours still contain many features that are important to an anarchist ethic: they promote skill-sharing over professional specialisation; fluidity and horizontal forms of organisation over hierarchies; sites for learning and personal growth away from the more controlled environments of formal education; and a celebration of playful inefficiency over the earnest efficiency of alienated work. This ethics of amateurism also offers an alternative to the increasingly specialised role of 'the activist' (Bobel 2007; Heckert 2002), and serves as a reminder that experimenting with more autonomous modes of living, as much as making music, can be done by anyone.

Certainly many of the DIY queer spaces discussed in the next section of this chapter were created by individuals and collectives with an affinity with more 'activist' forms of contemporary anarchist resistance and prefigurative experimentation. However, at least one example in what follows was the result of a group of friends (none of whom identified as 'activists' or 'anarchists') reaching the realisation that something needed to be done and that they could not rely on anyone else to do it for them.

Exploring moments of queer autonomy

I now want to examine four short examples of different ways of creating queer autonomous space. In doing so, I want to highlight the diversity of these spaces, as well as to suggest how moments of queer autonomy can emerge in other situations. These spaces are not discrete sites that exist in isolation from the others. They are overlapping and relational – many participants move between them, using each space to satisfy a particular set of needs and bringing lessons from one type of queer autonomous space to inform the creation and renewal of other sites. Similar spatial interventions are often replicated over time and in different locations. In the process, spaces that look and feel superficially similar may end up fulfilling quite distinct functions and may be interpreted in substantially different ways according to their context. I begin by examining the growth of activist-led urban experiments in queer autonomy. In contrast, I then focus on a set of rural, spiritual spaces which, despite a significantly different orientation, still share much in terms of form and process with their urban counterparts. Having examined these spaces which intentionally seek to position themselves at some distance from the mainstream, I consider a range of DIY queer music and club venues that have a more complex and fluid relationship to the commercial gay scene. Finally, I recall some more spontaneous outbreaks of queer autonomy that I observed whilst researching sites of public homosex and consider what they might suggest about the potential for new forms of queer autonomy. All of these sites rely on processes and relations of 'amateur' production to some extent.

Queer Mutinies

Writing a decade ago, after the peak of the early 1990s rave culture and the period of widespread media attention on high-profile environmental direct action, but before Seattle and the period of intense summit-hopping convergences, McKay cautioned that, '[t]he danger is that DiY Culture quietens marginalised voices and erases difference, and that, paradoxically, it achieved both of these by a loud rhetoric of inclusivity' (McKay 1998:45).
He went on to observe an apparent invisibility of lesbians and gay people and culture in the 1990s' DIY scene. He was partly right. In the year these comments were published a group of queer anarchists in London organised the first Queeruption gathering – to offer a DIY alternative to the blandness of the commercial gay scene, to draw together and share the skills that many had acquired through an involvement in the protest movements of the time, but also to create a safe space against the homophobia and machismo that they had experienced from others in those movements (Wilkinson 2009).
An international Queeruption gathering occurred each year from 1998 to 2007 (except in 2000, when no gathering happened, and 2005, when there were two) and they have now taken place in nine cities across three continents (Vanelslander 2007). Mostly these gatherings take place in large squatted premises, although in circumstances where there is no local tradition of squatting, or where to do so might draw too much unwanted attention from state authorities and risk the safety of participants, rented space has been used. The funds to enable the convergences are raised through benefit parties held both in the host city, by the organisers, and across the international network of past and future participants. The main programme of each gathering usually lasts for about a week and consists of workshops on political and ethical issues that share skills and foster creativity, alongside protests, direct actions and, of course, parties and celebrations. Accommodation is usually located on site, and a large part of each day can be taken up with the logistics of providing cheap, nutritious vegan food (and lots of cakes) for several hundred participants.[5] At most gatherings, the priorities and practicalities

of the day are shaped, on a consensus basis, by a morning plenary of as many participants as are interested in contributing to the process. At times, the consensus process has been slow and frustrating, slowed further by the need to provide translation for non-English speakers (however problematically, English has usually been the default language of these gatherings). However, facilitation skills have been actively shared amongst the participants and lessons have been carried from one gathering to another.

I have written at length elsewhere (Brown 2007a, 2007b) about both the exhilarating joys and the recurrent tensions and frustrations that can occur at Queeruptions, so do not intend to rehearse these ideas further here. However, there is one source of tension that arises year after year which warrants a brief mention (not least because it was raised in the discussion that followed this paper at the Anarchism and Sexuality conference) and that surrounds the (perceived) centrality of sex and specific notions of sex radicalism at these gatherings. These tensions often arise in relation to the sex party that occurs towards the end of most gatherings, but also in response to the flirtatious and sexually charged atmosphere that can arise within such an intense period of respite from the drudgery of quotidian life.[6] For many within this network of activists, being a 'radical queer' has become synonymous with an interest in non-monogamy, polyamory and a range of BDSM and public sex practices. The resulting assumption about others' sexual ethics and personal boundaries can be intimidating, frightening and exclusionary for some participants. Further effort is needed at future gatherings to foster mutual aid and an appreciation of difference within the context of this sex positive ethos (Rouhani forthcoming).

Occasions like Queeruption offer a specifically queer form of constructive direct action (Day 2005) – a convergence space (Routledge 2003, 2005) where radical queer activists from different countries can come together to share information, skills and community for a short period. They offer a form of community that is not based on adherence to social norms, but instead a community that is created through an 'open-ended process of mutual engagement and exploration' that is 'woven just tightly enough to offer comfort and self-determination, but always left loose enough to ensure difference' (Ferrell 2001:32).

Another set of spatial practices that are a mainstay of these anarcha-queer activist networks operate through interventions in mainstream Pride festivals and the creation of alternative, free, grassroots community celebrations. In Britain, North America and Australia, such interventions have been motivated by the mutation of LGBT pride parades from politicised community events that protested invisibility, in justice and police harassment in the 1970s and 1980s into contemporary urban spectacles offering commercial opportunities for corporate sponsors and place-marking opportunities for local and national governments keen to demonstrate their liberal credentials and boost tourism revenues. In this context, events like the Queer Mutinies in London, Gay Shame in San Francisco and Twee Pride in Manchester have enabled local queer activists to both playfully satirise the commodification of LGBT pride events and have demonstrated a practical example of low-impact, autonomous alternatives that can engage more than just core activists in the active creation of these event-spaces. They demonstrate what a small group of 'amateurs' can achieve for next to no expense. In the process, many people learnt new skills and discovered new talents. Although it is hard work to create the events, they offer a space in which participants can rest, relax and play together[7] – which is important for the sustainability of the multiple forms of resistance in which they are engaged.

Rural encounters

The examples I have just offered are of urban political community spaces. Next I want to explore rural examples of queer autonomous spaces. To this end, I could stay focused on politicised activist spaces and talk about the queer barrios at the convergences against the G8 summits at Gleneagles in 2005 (Harvie *et al.* 2005; Pickerill and Chatterton 2006) and Heiligendam in 2007, or various Climate Camps since then. Instead, I want to think about more spiritual queer spaces. I want to think about QPC (Queer Pagan Camp), as an innovation in itself and in the context of its overlaps with Radical Faerie gatherings. None of these spaces are straightforwardly anarchist in their orientation, but they are utilising non-hierarchical, do-it-

yourself models to create autonomous spaces for the exploration of specifically queer spiritual practices.

The Radical Faeries were formed in the United States in the 1970s, inspired in large part by the ideas and enthusiasm of a long-term gay activist, Harry Hay (although it is important to note that, to the extent that Hay 'founded' the Faeries, he was drawing on the experience of a series of gay men's experiments with rural and frequently communal modes of living). There are now Faerie circles and sanctuaries across North America, much of Western Europe and also in Australia (Povinelli 2006). If, as I charted earlier, contemporary anarcha-queer activism draws on a complex genealogy, then the same is true of the Radical Faeries, as Hennen demonstrates:

Radical Faerie culture is forged from an astonishingly diverse cultural tool box that includes Marxism, feminism, paganism, Native American and New Age spirituality, anarchism, the mythopoetic men's movement, radical individualism, the therapeutic culture of self-fulfilment and self-actualization, earth-based movements in support of sustainable communities, spiritual solemnity coupled with a camp sensibility, gay liberation, and drag.

(Hennen 2004:500–1)

He goes on to position the development of the Radical Faeries very much within a desire to escape and counter the rapid commodification of urban gay culture in the wake of early gay liberation politics. The Faeries appealed to a layer of gay men who were alienated by the growing sexual objectification of men's bodies during the 1970s, and the increasing dominance within the urban gay scene of hypermasculine tropes of desirability. In contrast, Harry Hay promoted an ethics of developing 'subject–subject consciousness' on the basis that 'one must always treat others as subjects like themselves, never as objects, or as a means to some instrumental end' (ibid.: 513). For Hay, subject–object relations amongst gay men were a product of the increasing 'hetero-imitative' focus of urban gay life that accompanied the growing commodification of the gay scene. He hoped that the rural retreats, gatherings and communal 'sanctuaries' developed by men inspired by the Faeries would create space where queer men could collectively build new relationships with each other based on intimacy and an ethics of speaking from the heart. Although Radical Faerie gatherings are intended to be spiritual spaces they are very inclusive, attracting men (and, at some gatherings, also women) from a range of different spiritual paths – Pagan, Buddhist, Christian and none. How these spiritual and ethical values are put into practice will be familiar to many who have participated in prefigurative autonomous spaces that function on non-hierarchical, participatory lines and attempt to embody their vision of a post-capitalist future in contemporary practices. 'Refreshingly, Faerie culture seems to continually privilege process over results. Faerie enterprises, from preparing a meal to creating a sanctuary, are notoriously inefficient affairs – and this is just the way most Faeries like it' (ibid.: 502).

Similar 'problems' can be witnessed at QPC, which is a ten-day gathering of queer pagans that has taken place in Britain each summer since 1998. It is not wholly coincidental that QPC began the same year as the first Queeruption gathering. From the beginning, the two networks have had strong links, with several key individuals involved in organising both gatherings over the years. Many feel an affinity with both concepts and there has been a mutual sharing of skills and organisational praxis. Similar links exist with several Radical Faerie circles. As the QPC's 'vision statement' notes:

Queer Pagan Camp grew out of the experiences of people being marginalised by wider society and other pagan or spiritual groups based on stereotypes of sexual identities and gender preferences. The first principal of Queer Paganism is respect for each other, ourselves, the Spirits and the Land, and we work on the basis of self-identification.

(QPC n.d.)

In contrast to the gender polarity inherent in many forms of pagan practice, this is a defiantly queer approach (very much in the sense of queer as a relational ethics that I described earlier). This queer sensibility moves beyond attempting to create a safe space for people of all sexualities and genders, and informs a queer pagan approach to spiritual practice and ritual –'we recognise that there are many paths to "spirit", "nature" and "magic" and we positively revel in diversity' (ibid.).

Partly out of necessity, due to lack of funds, and partly out of ethical principle (drawing on the prior involvement of many of the original organisers within feminist, queer and anarchist networks that stressed autonomous modes of organising), the camp had a participative, do-it-yourself ethos from the start. Although individuals take responsibility each year for arranging aspects of the camp (such as finding, renting and preparing the site, organising childcare and coordinating the kitchen), the group operates on the basis that the camp's organisers are

those who turn up for the publicised organising meetings throughout the year. The camp aspires to operate by consensus and all campers are encouraged to take responsibility for its daily functioning – chopping firewood, raddling the compost toilets, cooking the collective evening meal, offering workshops and rituals; or bringing the camp to life with music, costume and clowning. The achievement of truly inclusive, non-hierarchical and consensus-based forms of organising at QPC is an ongoing challenge and a work in progress. After thirteen years of operation, the camp's established customs and practice can seem opaque to some newcomers and can serve to inhibit the more spontaneous expressions of a DIY ethos some hold dear. Generally, the QPC community responds reflexively to these tensions and challenges; and a strong tradition of fooling at the camp serves to prick the pretensions of those perceived to be taking themselves too seriously or attempting to accumulate too much power.

This participative and non-hierarchical approach to running the camp has come to influence its rituals, the acts of magic that take place there and the ethics of relating to the more-than-human world(s) that they foster (Abram 1996):

As Queer Pagans we communicate directly with spirits, nature, ancestors, Gods, Goddesses or other divinities. We do not need mediators. We work consensually to create rituals. We do not need hierarchies. We welcome spirits and work with them. We do not command them. We share knowledge of different traditions and we create new ways of working. Stirring the cauldron of gender we are not limited by gender-based magical working. We believe we can all work with spiritual power, that we all can be our own healers, celebrants and guides.
And a lot of fabulous dressing up and glitter too!

(QPC n.d.)

Although the workshops at QPC can be a useful starting point for finding out the core beliefs and practices of different pagan traditions, many fuse traditions eclectically and, with camp élan, do not take themselves too seriously – 'enlightenment through lipstick' and 'prance dancing' being two memorable examples from recent years. Such a queer approach to magic and ritual can only come about as a result of the broader, non-hierarchical and autonomous modes of living experienced by the participants at QPC year after year.

Autonomy on the edge of the commercial scene

In contrast to the two examples I've already given, it is important to recognise that queer autonomy does not only exist outside the commercial gay scene. There are many sites that exist in a more complex and contradictory relationship to both the mainstream scene and the autonomous spaces I have already discussed. Following the emergence of punk in the mid-1970s, many gay punks found themselves caught between a growing gay bar scene that did not accommodate their musical tastes and a punk milieu that was not always welcoming of sexual difference. Their experience of feeling a partial affinity with two different sub-cultural groups, but experiencing only partial acceptance from both led to the development of the queercore music and performance scene. Since the 1980s, queer do-it-yourself networks have proliferated across much of the Global North, with the emergence of the internet strengthening connections across national borders. For Larry Bob, a long-term protagonist in the queercore scene on the West Coast of the United States, queercore offered an opportunity to engage and collaborate with a vast range of creative people:

In general, mass entertainment happens because it's profitable. Queercore isn't profitable – people do things because they want to have the sort of experience that queercore offers. It's such a cultural niche that it's only going to happen if people do it themselves.

(Larry Bob, quoted in Spencer 2005:281)

The DIY queer scene enables people to employ their own values around gender, money and censorship. The resulting events tend to be cheap, promote occasionally obscure musicians and amateur performers (often from amongst the clubs' regulars and their extended friendship networks), and frequently attempt to create an atmosphere that is welcoming of a broader range of sexual and gender difference than the niche marketplaces of the commercial mainstream. However, there is always a danger that, by drawing so heavily on close friendship networks, these gigs and club nights can become overly dominated by small cliques and end up negating their own inclusive intentions (Culton and Holtzman 2010; Jindal 2004).

In Britain, in recent years, the do-it-yourself approach to queer entertainment and clubbing has been sustained through the events organised around Club Fag (in Cardiff), Kaffequeeria (in

Manchester), Homocrime, Unskinny Bop and WANC (Women's Anarchist Nuisance Café) (in London), as well as Club Wotever (in London, Brighton and occasionally major cities throughout the rest of Europe). Some of these events take place in squatted venues and radical social centres, some do deals to bring custom to straight venues at quiet times of the week, and others (particularly Club Wotever) mostly utilise the infrastructure of the mainstream lesbian and gay bar scene. None of these events are run for profit, and most rely heavily on the enthusiasm of a small group of core organisers, even as they require the active participation of their audiences in the co-production of their events.

Homocrime was largely organised for the fun of it, to provide a space in which amateur musicians with a queer aesthetic could perform. It presented itself as a safe space for 'queers of all sexualities and genders'. The Homocrime events took place every second month (frequently alternating with dances organised by Unskinny Bop). They were an opportunity to showcase many lo-fi musicians and performers, and each night was planned to coincide with the release of a three-inch CD-R featuring related musicians. Given the amateur, do-it-yourself basis of the project, in evitably these CDs were not always finished in time, and the collective was realistic about the impact they would have:

Doing the *Singles Club* has always been one of my favourite parts of Homocrime. There are lots of talented & unpretentious kids around, and it's great to be able to help get their music 'out there' (i.e. into the bedrooms of tens of other people ...).

(Daniel, Homocrime 2006:5)

The club's friendly, appreciative audience inspired many attendees to start making their own music (without worrying about the limits of their technical abilities). Performances could be shambolic, but they were usually greeted with enthusiasm and encouragement. This commitment to creating a space in which to enjoy music is shared by the Unskinny Bop DJs. Whereas Homocrime was a space in which to hear music that was absent from most gay venues, to create one's own music, to listen to friends perform and celebrate lo-fi, do-it-yourself production values, Unskinny Bop was motivated by overcoming other barriers to the full enjoyment of music:

Unskinny Bop welcomes gals 'n' guys of all shapes and persuasions onto the dancefloor with open arms. We want you to experience the joy of dancing with wild, thrilling abandon to your favourite songs, unintimidated by fear of ridicule, evil stares and nasty comments. And we don't want it to stop here: as it is at the disco, so it shall be in life.

(Unskinny Bop n.d.)

Club Wotever, although it has grown into an international phenomenon, originated in a similar DIY impulse to create a space that was more inclusive by dissolving the heteronormative gender binaries that predominate on the gay scene, as much as in the straight world. Club Wotever relies on amateur performers and a large proportion of its audience making the effort to dress up in homemade costumes for its theme nights in order to create the atmosphere that makes the club work as an alternative to the mainstream:

We welcome all with a sense of humour – who like to dress up and flirt with all and everyone. This is a friendly place and we do our best to spread the LOVE. We are open for all genders, sexualities and expressions. The only thing we ask for is: RESPECT yourself and RESPECT others at the club, gig, screening or happening where we are. We are a non-profit organization who work hard to be able to share ourselves with you.

(Club Wotever 2007)

The political implications of this commitment to the collective, participatory creation of an autonomous space that attempts to transcend and work through the exclusions frequently perpetuated in commodified venues, with a clearer distinction between the producers and consumers of entertainment, is more clearly posed in the following statement from the WANC website. Here, too, the political importance of sharing fun and laughter in the process of building prefigurative spaces of queer feminist autonomy is also reiterated:

Women's Café is about ... using the power of music, cooking, eating and laughter as a way of understanding and uniting women from all backgrounds and walks of life, dissolving or celebrating our differences of sexuality or class. A place of mutual participation. A DIY space that is a panacea to passive consumption ... Like all places where freedom works, a structure is created and held, wherein anything can happen. It is a friendly space where anyone is accepted ... The café builds a community from our often fragmented inner city lifestyles. It anchors and roots us, providing us with positive reference points for who we are, all on our own terms, which is a political feat in itself!

(WANC website, www.wanc-cafe.org.uk)

Many of the organisers of the various projects outlined in this section have an affinity with the anarcha-queer activism of the Queeruption networks and several have been active participants in shaping those gatherings and the related projects. Of all of these entertainment projects, WANC probably maintains the strongest and most obvious connections with more directly political forms of activism. It has run benefit nights to raise funds for activist initiatives

and to pay off the fines imposed on activists for their participation in direct actions and protests. At one early WANC event, women from the Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp offered a skill-sharing workshop on the use of lock-on blockading techniques. Similarly, the themed café nights have often developed more improvised and spontaneous forms of entertainment, such as the 'tomboy night' that featured tree climbing in the local park and a conkers tournament. They have also more frequently breached the shell of the venue where the café has been hosted and led to performative interventions in the public sphere, for example when a flamenco theme led to the women staging a 'bull run' in the street outside.

Although the conventional gay male media have largely ignored the existence of these clubs, some elements of the lesbian media have occasionally run features promoting the existence of Club Wotever, WANC and Unskinny Bop as quirky alternatives to more traditional lesbian venues. If WANC has stayed closest in form to the autonomous spaces created through Queeruption gatherings, convergence spaces and social centres (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006), Club Wotever has found a place for itself right on the edge of the commercial lesbian and gay scene. These clubs and cafés are situated across a broad spectrum of autonomous forms, from those that utilise squatted spaces, reclaimed materials and 'skipped' food, through to those that are more closely implicated in commercial transactions and business-like forms of organisation. Nevertheless, to some extent, they were all inspired by an amateur, DIY impulse to create a safe or inclusive space that satisfies needs and desires that are unmet on the commercial gay scene. They continue to operate on a not-for-profit basis. And, they encourage the active participation of their audiences as the co-producers of the space, rather than as consumers of a product. As such, they inhabit an autonomous queer geography.

Autonomous housekeeping

My final example is of several fleeting moments of autonomous action that I witnessed a few years ago in a 'cottage' (public toilet) in East London where men regularly cruised each other for sex (Brown 2008). This playful encounter is suggestive of what Nigel Thrift has identified as the possibilities for a politics of affect and 'tending' where the 'political imperative is to widen the potential number of interactions a living thing can enter into, [and] to widen the margin of "play"' (Thrift 2004b: 70). This is not a politics of demands or rights claims, but a politics of 'giving a chance to encounters and interactions that are partially invisible in the dominant regime and are excluded from the definition of what counts as knowledge' (Thrift 2004a: 84).

I see a glimmer of this impulse towards 'tending' in this incident. It occurred on a quiet night, when there was no cruising taking place, and in a period when the local council had neglected to clean the toilet for many weeks. In the absence of the flow of cruising men needed to keep the sexual energy of the cottage going, a small group of regulars, all of them by then friends, were huddled inside the toilet gossiping. After chatting for a while, they broke into the (abandoned) attendant's office, brought out two large jugs of detergent, mops and buckets, and started thoroughly cleaning the place.

At the time, this 'housekeeping' of the site amused me. It was certainly performed for effect. However, in hindsight this expression of care for a meaningful and strategic site by some of its users moves me in other ways. As Jon Binnie (2001) and Paul Hallam (1993) have argued, dirt and dereliction may contribute to the erotic appeal of such sites, but there are limits. At the time, the toilet was falling into a state of grimy disrepair that had moved beyond erotic frisson. As a result, despite the constant availability of access to the site and little risk of official interruption, many of the users of the site were abandoning it. There were more quiet nights than not. By taking it upon themselves to clean the site, this band of friends were performing an act of care for the site and ensuring its functional sustainability as a 'cottage' (as opposed to a semi-derelict public toilet). Their act of care-taking reveals an intuitive understanding of the importance of the fabric of the site to sustaining the potential for affective encounters between men (Brown 2008). The cruiser knows, viscerally, just how much dirt is needed to sustain the erotic potential of a public sex environment. In tending to this strategic site, I believe the men were asserting their autonomy as users of the space.

From autumn 2001 until the toilet's eventual long-term closure in 2004, there was a war of attrition between the cruisers, the police and council authorities, and some local residents who

contested the increasing visibility of the site as a public sex environment. The council tried closing the site early or for long stretches of time. The police made regular, visible patrols in front of the toilet at night, occasionally looking inside (if it was open), but seldom doing more than moving men on or temporarily disrupting the cruising. Some of the local residents took matters into their own hands and, when the council suspended the evening closures for a while, turned up with their own padlocks and intimidation. In response, many of the regular cruisers actively defended *their* site, by their continuing presence, a refusal to be shamed by the police and occasional verbal confrontations with the disapproving locals. When the toilet was locked shut, it was frequently reclaimed as a cottage:

As I walked down the steps, there was one very obvious change to the space. In addition to the horizontal shutter over the steps (that appeared some time last year, but which I have never seen shut over), there is now a very basic 'door' at the bottom of the stairs. This door is little more than a roughly trimmed sheet of plywood on a couple of hinges and with a padlock to seal it shut. This attempt to further prevent queer pleasure after dark appeared to have been as unsuccessful as all the other 'security' measures, as the door had obviously been forced open on a number of occasions and now looked only notionally secure.

(Field note: The Toilet, 3 August 2002).

Of course, it is possible to argue that, at least to some extent, it was the cruisers' comfort and confidence in claiming the toilet as a public sex environment that ended up making it *too* visible, drawing unwanted attention to the site and accelerating its demise. That dynamic was certainly at work. However, something else of significance was definitely going on as well. In defending that space of multiple potentialities of pleasure, men were claiming an autonomous space. Both their appropriation of (otherwise heteronormative) public space and their tending of that space are indicative of an autonomous politics that exceeds the efforts of self-identified 'activist' networks. The men were asserting their autonomy to use a publicly owned space in a manner that asserted their right to difference. They were asserting their presence in the public realm *as a* public. As Ferrell has rhetorically enquired, paraphrasing Brecht, 'which is the worse crime, to outlaw public space, or to open public space to outlaws?' (Ferrell 2001:224). This minor, low-key mobilisation in defence of a politics of pleasure offers some hope in the face of increasing pessimism about the continuing viability of many public sex environments and the 'laboratories of love and friendship' that they sustain (Bell and Binnie 2000:132). Although they are fewer and further between now than they were in the past, cottages and outdoor cruising grounds are still strategically important non-commercial spaces that can foster communality across class and ethnic distinctions. In these places actions speak louder than words, and they can serve to question and undermine rigid sexual identities and social norms. In the most secure and well established of sites, this communality begins to take the form of autonomous modes of being that demonstrate the potential for other ways of engaging with the fabric of the city and changing the means by which queer people relate to each other in queer ways.

Queer urban futures

In many ways, although these four examples have described quite a diverse range of events and spaces, all of them have arisen from groups of friends identifying unmet needs in their lives and taking collective, constructive direct action to rectify the problem or attempt to create what they desire. As a result, these spaces are directly experienced rather than mediated through the commodity. But they are not without their problems.

In this concluding section, I want to examine some of the continuing tensions and problems that exist in these spaces, but also draw out some of the potential that they offer for increasing the scope for autonomous modes of queer life in contemporary urban spaces. In doing so, I draw on elements of the wide-ranging discussion about queer autonomous spaces at the Anarchism and Sexuality conference, at which participants raised many concerns about how to overcome the limitations and persisting exclusions within sites that mean so much to so many of them. Discussants were concerned that in Western Europe and North America too many queer autonomous spaces remain predominantly 'white' environments (Jindal 2004; Starr 2006; cf. Kuntsman and Miyake 2008) and involve few people over the age of forty. Others worried that the process of experimenting with queer autonomous forms was still perceived as something 'we' do, that it has not escaped the 'activist ghetto' (Anonymous 2000a, 2000b). For some, there was concern that some activists have attempted to transplant forms of queer

autonomy developed in one location, without adapting them sufficiently to the political and cultural dynamics of their own situation. In thinking about the limitations on how well experiments in queer autonomy travel, some participants voiced a concern that the hedonism, frivolity and sex-positive pleasures that have become central to Queeruption gatherings and similar spaces were not appropriate to all geographic locations. Certainly some activists stayed away from the 2006 Queer-uption in Tel Aviv because they could not countenance having a sex party in a war zone (whilst others were equally adamant that the unleashing of queer exuberance was exactly the inspiration needed in such circumstances). Of course, as I have already noted, the centrality of public displays of 'sex radicalism' can be off-putting, offensive and exclusionary for some potential allies who, although queer and open to anarchist social politics, hold different sexual ethics. Although some of these concerns are specific to queer spaces, similar issues confront all of those committed to creating space for autonomous living. The ongoing process of seeking solutions to these problems is at the heart of claiming autonomy and living without deference to externally imposed norms. For example, Pickerill and Chatterton make the following observations with regard to the network of autonomous social centres operating in Britain:

Continuing problems of internal hierarchies (of knowledge and competence) and boundaries of inclusion/exclusion exist within social centres. Many participants are acutely aware of outsiders' perceptions. Do they appear as ghettos that stop people from participating? Are they really connected to everyday issues? Is it easy for people to come and get involved? While no easy answers to these issues exist, addressing them is the bedrock of making autonomy. Interstitial living can also be a source of creativity, producing hybrid, flexible and transient identities, challenging the norms we live by and creating potential new interactions.

(Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:742)

Transformations of urban (or rural) space cannot be separated from the transformations of everyday life in those environments (Pinder 2005:3). David Bell has suggested that the queer city can be found in the 'creative and wild possibilities' that are (barely) contained within the urban form (Bell 2001:102). By exploiting these 'wild possibilities' and the gap between people's desires and their lived experience, modest alterations in the uses of the city in the here and now can reveal new forms of queer sociality, and *vice versa*.

The spaces and encounters described in this chapter, although not all directly and consciously inspired by anarchist thought, offer signposts towards a world in which more people care for themselves and others in diverse autonomous, self-organised ways. The case studies illustrate that experiments with autonomous modes of living are not the sole preserve of self-identified activists, but are enacted through a wide range of amateur endeavours that frequently start with a small group of like-minded friends, but draw wider networks of people into their processes. These amateur experiments suggest means of moving towards a more autonomous, equitable and compassionate society, without necessarily having all of the answers or solutions to how to get from 'here' to 'there'. Indeed, this approach recognises that there are no once-and-forever universal solutions, preferring instead an ongoing process of experimentation, change and adaptation. The process of creating more queer space in the city could begin with observing and interacting with what currently exists before changing anything and then attempting to make the least change for maximum effect. This might offer greater recognition of the significance of relative location to these observations and developments. The functioning of any given site is affected by what surrounds it. I hope ways can be found of extending to non-human objects and entities queer's ethical commitment to engaging with difference and relating ethically with others. In this, I would include the land upon which such experiments are built.

In their imaginative work on the diverse economy and existing post-capitalist social relations, J. K. Gibson-Graham (2006:81) stress the importance of creating and maintaining 'commons', a process which they consider is

by definition an ethical practice of being-in-common, one that informs material practices and social boundaries of community … The commons can be seen as a community stock that needs to be maintained and replenished so that it can continue to constitute the community by providing its direct input (subsidy) to survival.

(Gibson-Graham 2006:96–7)

I would suggest that most (if not all) of the examples of queer autonomous spaces that I have offered in this chapter are important queer commons that foster alternative modes of communality, offer participants a chance to slow down, and attempt to offer cheap or free entertainment, services and support that are not dominated by capitalist social relations (Brown 2009). As such, I believe, these spaces need to be defended and extended.

So, what might a sustainable queer city look like? I hope it would be based upon spaces that promote social relations that foster 'responsibility, reciprocity, collectivism and mutuality' (Chatterton 2006:261). The challenge ahead, for those of us who recognise the value and importance of autonomous queer spaces, is to resist imposing our (individual and collective) visions on others, but instead to invite and encourage them to experiment with the realisation of their own visions (Hern 2010).

I want to encourage a proliferation of diverse queer spaces across the urban landscape, rather than concentrating them in some 'radical' replication of 'gay ghettos'. This invitation to open forms of integration might need to be balanced or offset against an appreciation of the value and productivity of marginal spaces, identities and practices. Those who cultivate land according to permaculture principles (Whitefield 2002) recognise that the zone where different eco-systems meet (such as the edge of a forest or the rocky pools along the seashore) can often be highly fertile, in novative and productive places. Queer space does, and I hope will continue to, harness this 'edge effect'.[8] By encouraging the spread of a mosaic of queer spaces across the city, rather than concentrating and consolidating them in one space, queer people might be able to maximise the productive opportunities that arise from their interaction with other ways of living in the city (City Repair Project 2006). I hope that this would lead to a multiplicity of different modes of queer living that would exceed the limitations of what is currently on offer either on the commercial gay scene or through existing activist networks. I believe glimpses of what could be possible can be seen in a host of existing amateur networks. Just as cruisers notice how the city's streets, buildings and open spaces resonate with particular states of mind and offer possibilities for the enactment of their erotic desires, so queer urban dwellers have the capacity to extend their repertoire of ways to observe, interact with and adapt the fabric of the city to better meet their unmet needs. Through these processes of active engagement in the (re)creation of urban space (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), queers can attempt to produce more spaces that can be directly experienced, imagined and reinvented for *queer* autonomous living.

Notes

1 At times, bringing this perspective into the realm of academic sexual geography has felt quite lonely, as few people seemed to appreciate the connections and analysis I was trying to make. Thankfully, I have been surrounded by many encouraging and supportive people along the way who have generously engaged with my work and offered constructive critiques. In particular, I would like to thank Loretta Lees, Tim Butler, Kath Browne, Jason Lim, Jamie Heckert, Carrie Hamilton, Jenny Pickerill, John Levin and Eleanor Wilkinson for all the friendly discussions over the years. I also want to remember Sam 'Tumbleweed' Roberts, who liked what I had to say, shared his own analysis of queer autonomy with me (at great length), but died horribly young in the months following the Leeds conference.

2 There is, to me, an obvious parallel between Holloway's 'power-to-do' and Starhawk's (1997) concept of 'power-with'.

3 The feminine form *anarcha* is generally used both to disrupt normative assumptions about gendered forms of (anarchist) activism and to stress the links between anarcha-queer and anarcha-feminist praxis (Dark Star 2002).

4 'Skiffle' is a form of folk jazz played on improvised instruments that was revived in the late 1950s in the UK (and USA) but had its origins in New Orleans earlier in the twentieth century.

5 Vegan food is commonly served at such events because it is cheap, does not involve the exploitation of animals and is inclusive of the dietary requirements of the largest number of participants.

6 I am willing to accept that this analysis might be too reliant on my own affective responses to participating in such gatherings. I recognise that participants may act flirtatiously in these circumstances because they are nervous and it helps them make connections with people or 'fit in', or because it helps demonstrate their 'queerness', or for a host of other reasons I have not yet considered.

7 Whilst I stand by this analysis, I thank Jamie Heckert for reminding me that participation in these types of gathering, event and action can also be physically and emotional tiring.

8 I see clear parallels between the ethics underpinning permaculture design and many contemporary visions of a society based on anarchist and autonomous principles. There is not, however, space in this chapter to fully explore either these connections or the full implications of associating queer social relations with permaculture's 'edge effect'.

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Chapter 11

Afterword

On the phenomenology of fishbowls

Kristina N. Weaver

I hitched my way to the conference in the back of an SUV captained by a military mum taking two teenagers on a grand tour of universities. The act of aiding and abetting myself, my traveling companion, and a bass guitar had been her second thought. Having passed us by, she then stopped and pulled over before entering the motorway. She had never before given a lift to a hitchhiker, but the sight of our bedraggled forms and the sparkle of her bright young daughters had encouraged her to bravery.

Once we were snug in the spare back seat (and provided with glossy gossip magazines to help us pass the time), our rescuer asked where we were headed. When I replied, "a conference about anarchism and sexuality," she gave us some sound advice: "Don't get arrested."

Not being a presenter, myself, I had expectations of the usual passive absorption typical of academic conferences—at best the chance to slot a few more nodes in my network of activist and academic contacts; at worst an encounter with the kinds of social policing so common in queer spaces. I did not think that was the kind of prison this concerned mum meant, and so I reassured her of my unarrestable status.

A few days later, my sights on the next adventure, I could confidently confirm that there had been no jail cell. I was not caught or cornered at that conference in Leeds. I was not stuck or stashed, labeled or locked away, but her predilection had not been far off. Captivated I had been, my breath frequently catching at the truths expressed, the stories witnessed, the theories spun, and the guards released. My mind had been arrested more than once by the magic of awakened life.

I subscribe to the viewpoint that we are all anarchists most of the time. We live and delight in the muddling through of mutual aid. Were this not my belief, I would not have bothered to stick out my thumb as a preferred mode of transportation to an academic conference. But I did not encounter the formal theories and practices of anarchism until my bright and early undergraduate days in the States, when the Battle of Seattle introduced me to the possibilities of effective experiments in nonhierarchy. By the time I was a postgraduate in Scotland and an attendee of the conference, I had become a seasoned participant/facilitator of marathon consensus meetings, makeshift spokescouncil sessions, real-time affinity group huddles, rebel clown army trainings, forum theater performances, and whatever other modes of radical process we could find a use for.

Conference organizer and dear friend Jamie shares my love of anarchist process, and upon meeting him in Leeds I was delighted to learn that he and Richard had designed this gathering with the express purpose of combining activist strategies for participation and discussion with the rigors and privileges of academic reflection. Collapse the binary distinction between the ivory tower and the social center, and see what survives. When Jamie asked me to facilitate one of the sessions, I was excited to be gifted a role in an experiment so many of us have dreamed of, flirted with, and squeezed into the margins of our work.

Jamie suggested a fishbowl, a prospect that scattered shivers across my skin. I had often read and heard of this methodology, used to encourage conversation capable of delving into issues and surfacing latent emotions. Anarcho-nerd that I am, I was both thrilled and terrified to be charged with setting up this process after one of the morning's panel sessions.

Jamie and I conferred briefly on the rules of the game. Variations exist, of course, but the fishbowl we devised took the following shape. After the usual panel of paper presenters, session attendees were enlisted to clear the room of all but four chairs, which we arranged in a circle in the center of the space. Participants were then invited to form a larger ring around the chairs. Three volunteers occupied the center of the circle and engaged in open discussion on

the topics that had been introduced by the panelists. The rest of us were tasked with the practice of active and mindful listening. At any time, a fourth person from the audience ring could silently occupy the vacant chair in the "fishbowl." One of the original speakers would then be required to silently and promptly volunteer to leave the center, thereby sustaining a continual rotation and preserving the form of the method.

As it happened, I had never before facilitated a group experience that required so little active work on my part. If explained well and enacted by willing and present participants, the fishbowl method is truly self-facilitating. It requires a dedicated exploration of external as well as internal dynamics of power. Those who are accustomed to taking up space and using up time become very aware of the requirement to share the privilege of speaking. Those who prefer the silent margins experience the visibility of this conditioning and are encouraged to step into the experiment of being heard, of being seen.

On this particular occasion, this conscious interplay of power and engagement yielded a fascinating, complex conversation. Precisely because the discourse was bounded in such an elegant form, its circuit was liberated to follow multiple leads, to retrace steps, to falter and begin again, to dive into surprising depths. Our fishbowl covered a wide range of challenging issues. Full-time activists, many of whom had been skeptical of the value of the conference before arriving, here experienced the opportunity to speak and reflect at length, with no particular goal or intention. Many expressed gratitude for the quality of listening in the room, the active interest of others in a number of frustrations, hopes, and dreams that were not on the initial agenda. Academics commented on the simple freedom found in forming a circle of fellowship at an academic conference—a forum where hierarchy ordinarily holds sway. Panelists enjoyed the rare experience of witnessing a present-time application of the ideas they had offered up.

More than what was spoken, when I think of the Anarchism and Sexuality conference fishbowl I remember the pleasure we felt in creating it. Above all, a fishbowl requires that we take a genuine interest in one another. There was a sense of joint ownership and mutual discovery that animate the experience of learning at its best. The question and answer time allotted to that panel went at least forty minutes over schedule, until we were forced to break the trance. As participants poured out of the room into the remainder of the day, I remember marveling at shining faces, listening eyes, and a resilient quality of possibility.

Since that time, the fishbowl has become a treasured tool in my kit of anarchist praxis. I taught the method to a collective of young Nigerian activists working on issues of public health and urban development in Ibadan, one of Africa's most ancient and populous cities. They were excited to use it as a way of drawing out complex attitudes around the centralized leadership of their organization and the future direction of their work. I facilitated a fishbowl as a strategy for safely sustaining frank conversation about racism in a mixed race discussion and action group convened in a polarized city in Central Virginia. Most recently, after teaching the method to members of a forum theater collective I work with, I was delighted to experience its reinterpretation. Members of the group were inspired to craft a silent fishbowl that employed contact improvisation dance and other modes of physical theater, allowing for the nonverbal exploration of interrelational tensions, liberations, desires, and expressions.

These are reasons people come to the Academy. These are reasons people take to the Streets. I look forward to my next adventure in self-facilitated sharing, a possibility embodied for me by the Anarchism and Sexuality conference. At the end of the day and over breakfast the next morning, I heard how the experiment this conference undertook served as a much-needed success and restoration in the lives of many of its enactors. I left Leeds with the impression of shared feelings of substantial nourishment through one another, a looser grasp on my own identities and a firmer conviction in the powers of intersection, interdiscipline, and interdependence. I remain grateful for the opportunity I was offered to participate in this alchemy, and for the courage of a mother in an SUV who made the passing choice to help a few strangers get to Leeds on time.

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