

INTRODUCTION

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As a philosophical and political movement, anarchism has been expanding for two centuries and continues to grow and develop in a genuinely cosmopolitan manner around the world. In fact, as the Argentinean sociologist Christian Ferrer argues, anarchism may be considered, “after Christian evangelization and capitalist expansion, the most successful migratory experience in the history of the world.”¹ At the same time, academic research on anarchism has long been viewed as irrelevant and obscure; it is only in the context of recent political events—events in which the decentralized organizational strategies advocated by anarchists throughout history have played a prominent role—that academics have begun to take a second look at anarchist theory and practice. Not surprisingly many if not most academic studies of anarchism have been carried out within conventional disciplinary boundaries. However, if we recognize anarchism as “a locally contextualized [but also] historically specific manifestation of a larger antiauthoritarian tradition,”² we would do well to heed George Woodcock’s suggestion that “simplicity is, precisely, the first thing we need to avoid”³ in studying anarchism. To the extent that conventional disciplinary methods can be and often are too “simple” for something as complex as anarchism, this book advocates the use of pluralistic, interdisciplinary approaches to the emerging field of anarchist studies.

“Anarchism,” writes Peter Marshall, “is not only an inspiring idea but [also]... part of a broader historical movement”⁴ which begins with the revolutions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and continues through the French Commune in the 1870s, the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, and the emergence of the New Left in the 1960s. More recently, one need look no further than the uprising of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*⁵ in 1994, the Seattle anti-WTO protests in 1999, the Arab Spring in 2010, Occupy Wall Street and the Spanish *indignado* movement in 2011, and the Québec student protests in 2012 for confirmation of David Graeber’s hypothesis that “anarchism is undergoing a veritable renaissance” and that “anarchist principles—autonomy, voluntary

association, self-organization, direct democracy, mutual aid—have become the basis for organizing new social movements from Karnataka to Buenos Aires.”⁶ For all this interest and enthusiasm, however, anarchist history has been largely overlooked and underappreciated, while anarchist theory and practice have been, and continue to be, widely misunderstood. The burgeoning field of anarchist studies has evolved in part to remedy this situation.

The vitality of contemporary anarchist studies is evidenced by the steady proliferation of organizations (e.g., the North American Anarchist Studies Network, the Anarchist Studies Network in the UK) and projects (e.g., the Anarchist Studies Initiative at the State University of New York at Cortland, Continuum Books’ Contemporary Anarchist Studies series)—to say nothing of countless informal initiatives (e.g., Free Schools, Infoshops) around the world. This book seeks not only to provide a representative sample of the sort of work being done in contemporary anarchist studies, but also to contribute actively to the growth and development of the field. Although it is a product of conversations, debates, and presentations from the 3rd *Annual North American Anarchist Studies Network Conference* (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2012), it is not merely a record of proceedings. The chapters contained herein aim to demonstrate the dynamic, multifaceted, and interdisciplinary nature of contemporary anarchist studies and, in so doing, to promote and maintain dialogue between the different academic fields which comprise it.

With these ends in mind, we propose three concrete objectives for the present volume: first, to represent “anarchist studies” as a credible and independent field of intellectual inquiry; second, to situate anarchism within a broader transhistorical and transcultural antiauthoritarian tradition, as demonstrated by the wide range of topics discussed; and third, to formulate an approach to anarchist studies which, following Murray Bookchin’s suggestion, can anchor “seemingly disparate social problems in an analysis of the underlying social relations: capitalism and hierarchical society”⁷ and which, in the words of David Graeber, is not “based on the need to prove others’ fundamental assumptions wrong...” but “to find particular projects which reinforce each other.” The book is accordingly divided into five parts, each of which represents a dialogue between the chapters contained within them.

Part One, which is dedicated to philosophy and theory, attempts to place classical anarchism in conversation with contemporary anarchist theory. Dana Williams’ contribution seeks to forge a link between the ideas of classical anarchist theorists (such as Proudhon and Kropotkin) and various pioneers in the field of sociology in order to develop a much-

needed anarchist approach to sociology. The section concludes with Jon Bekken's study of Kropotkin's ideas and their relevance to contemporary manifestations of anarchism.

Part Two is concerned with the historical analysis of anarchism *vis-à-vis* the formulation of new theoretical frameworks and methodologies. While focusing chiefly on the *fin-de-siècle*, the chapters in this section explore the diversity and cosmopolitanism of the classical anarchist movement as it existed in different geographical regions. The section begins with a study of identity construction within the Swiss anarchist movement with particular attention to print culture. In the next chapter, Puerto Rican anarchist discourse is analyzed through the lens of its literary production in order to demonstrate how anarchists created a unique radical narrative in the context of their immediate historical reality. Another chapter presents a novel methodology for outlining the networks created by the *Galleanisti* of New England. The final chapter of the section focuses on the anarchist aesthetic and its materialization through anarchist practices, including the creation of anarchist spaces.

Part Three highlights the enormous importance of anarchist aesthetics through analyses of its cultural and artistic production, as well as of the representation of anarchism in the media. The first chapter focuses on the representation of the body in propaganda posters during the Spanish Civil War. This is followed by a critique of Cornelius Cardew's book, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, from the standpoint of anarchist epistemology. Another chapter discusses anarchist media in the United States and questions the effectiveness of the Internet as a way to spread ideas outside of the anarchist milieu. This is followed by a proposal to abolish copyrights along with suggested alternatives. The section concludes with an anthropological analysis of material culture inside contemporary anarchist circles and presents a theoretical model structured for this task.

Part Four focuses on the spiritual, religious, and the ethical. Two of the chapters will discuss spiritualism from the standpoint of the Puerto Rican anarchist and activist Luisa Capetillo. There is also a chapter on the relation between Christianity and anarchism. The section concludes with a chapter that develops an analysis of the capability of anarchism to create a coherent ethical and moral system based on complete individual freedom in a social context.

Part Five is dedicated to anarchist praxis in contemporary struggles. Three of the chapters in this section are concerned with animal liberation. Each articulates problems and critical appraisals of proposed solutions to these problems. Another chapter discusses pedagogical projects loosely

based on anarchist ideals. Another chapter looks at the influence of anarchist and libertarian ideas in the *Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores*. The book concludes with a chapter examining the relation between anarchist theory and national liberation struggles.

Notes

1. Christian Ferrer, *Cabezas de tormenta* (Buenos Aires: Utopía Libertaria, 2004), p. 65. Our translation.
2. Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011), p. 258.
3. Quoted in Francisco José Cuevas Noa, *Anarquismo y educación: La propuesta sociopolítica de la pedagogía libertaria* (Madrid: Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, 2003), p. 19. Our translation.
4. Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), p. 671.
5. Colloquially known as the Zapatistas.
6. David Graeber, “Anarchism, Academia, and the Avant-Garde” in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, ed. R. Amster, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 105.
7. Murray Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993-1998* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 1999) p. 161.