Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies
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Editorial — Post-anarchism Today

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Welcome to Post-anarchism Today. This is certainly not *USA Today*, et ce n'est certainement pas *Aujourd'hui en France*. Indeed, it is a refreshing antidote to all such discourses of modern state capitalism. During its short but colourful existence, post-anarchism has always been *libertarian* and *socialist* in its basic philosophical outlook: that's the *anarchism* part. But post-@ has also maintained its independence from modern rationalism and modern concepts of subjectivity: that's the *post-* part. As I survey post-anarchism today, I find to my surprise and delight that *both* parts are stronger than ever. It's now clear that post-@ is a part of anarchism, not something that stands against it. It's equally clear that post-@ has changed anarchism in some interesting and important ways.

I speak of post-anarchism today because I believe that we are living through a post-anarchist moment. I know, I know: the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk, so how can I claim to understand the moment I'm living in? But one of the many great things about post-@ is that it means we can be done, finally, with Hegel. Minerva's owl needs to get a job. We need a new bird, faster, more intuitive, more open source: something more like the Linux penguin. Things happen faster than they used to, and the rate of change is accelerating. Our ability to comment on these things must also accelerate. Thus I maintain that we may, in fact, study our own political and intellectual environment. Indeed, I feel that we *must* do this, or risk being overtaken by events. Post-anarchism waits for no one.

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When I speak of post-anarchism today, I also imply that there was post-anarchism *yesterday*. Here I invoke the peculiar, powerful alchemy of the historian: I declare that there is an object of study called post-anarchism, and that this object already has a history. An outrageously brief narrative of that history might go something like this: post-@ was born in the mid-1980s, in Hakim Bey's 'Temporary Autonomous Zone'. Throughout the 90s it grew and prospered in that era's distributed, rhizomatic networks, the Internet and the World Wide Web. Post-@ went to school in the pages of journals like Britain's *Anarchist Studies* and Turkey's *Siyahi*. Todd May gave it a *philosophy*. Saul Newman gave it a *name* and an interest in *psychology*. I encouraged post-@ to take an interest in popular culture (and vice versa). Richard J.F. Day introduced post-@ to the newest social movements: the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Thoughtful critics like Benjamin Franks developed intriguing *critiques* of post-anarchism (Franks, 2007). Duane Rousselle and Süreyyya Evren gave post-@ a *Reader*. And now, here we are! Using this crazy little thing called post-anarchism to inaugurate a bold new journal, one which promises to examine the cultural environment of our postmodern age through an anarchist lens!

But wait just a minute. May, Day, Newman and Call sounds more like a law firm than a revolution. Indeed, early post-@ was justly criticized as another ivory tower phenomenon for white, male, bourgeois intellectuals. Luckily, post-anarchism today is nothing like that. It's transnational, transethnic and transgender. It speaks in popular and populist voices, not just on the pages of academic journals like this one. Post-anarchism today is a viral collection of networked discourses which need nothing more in common than their belief that we can achieve a better world if we say goodbye to our dear old friend the rational Cartesian self, and embrace instead the play of symbol and desire. All the kids are doing it these days: the Black Bloc, the queers, the culture jammers, the anti-colonialists. Post-anarchism today is a set of discourses which speaks to a large, flexible, free-wheeling coalition of anarchist groups: activists, academics and artists, perverts, post-structuralists and peasants. As Foucault once said, 'don't ask who we are and don't expect us to remain the same'. We are the whatever-singularity that lurks behind a black kerchief. We might look like Subcommander Marcos, or Guy Fawkes, or your weirdo history professor. We are everybody and we are nobody. We can't be stopped, because we don't even exist.

When I review the brief but exciting history of post-anarchism in this way, it suddenly seems that post-@ might possess everything it needs to constitute not merely a *moment*, but an actual *movement*. Franks (2007) has suggested that such a movement might be emerging. In the past I have hesitated to agree. After all, one doesn't like to be accused of overblown, breathless revolutionary rhetoric. But the existence of this journal, *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, has convinced me that the time to hesitate is through. A decade into the third millennium, post-anarchism has become a self-realizing desire, a kind of Deleuzian desiring machine. According to the Deleuzian theories which inform most of the essays in this volume, such machines actually produce reality (Deleuze, 1983). Like all good desiring machines, post-@ operates by *multiplicity*. In these pages, scholars of many different nationalities, languages, ethnicities, genders, sexualities and theoretical perspectives have come together to talk about post-anarchism, its promise, its potential, its problems. This journal contains thoughtful, passionate defences of post-anarchism, and equally insightful, equally passionate critiques of it. Some of the essays in this volume are not particularly post-anarchist in their outlook or method, yet even these share certain concerns with post-@: concerns, for example, about architecture, territories, the organization of space. These essays follow lines of flight which sometimes intersect with post-anarchism, and these points of intersection are rich with potential.

At least four of the articles in this issue occupy the terrain of anarchist political philosophy, which suggests that post-@ has by no means abandoned the central concerns of traditional anarchism. Saul Newman's essay examines one of the most serious obstacles to any anarchist revolution: self-domination, or the desire we feel for our own domination. Drawing on the radical psychoanalytic tradition, Newman argues compellingly that any effective anarchist politics must directly address our psychic dependence on power. Newman's critical project is vitally important, in that it motivates us to seek strategies by which we may overcome our complicity with political and economic power. Thus I have argued, for example, that the practices of BDSM or "kink" might satisfy our need for power without reproducing statist or capitalist power structures (Call, 2011b).

Thomas Swann's essay extends an intriguing debate about moral universalism. Post-@ undeniably includes a dramatic critique of such universalism. Benjamin Franks (2008) has responded to this

critique by deploying a "practical anarchism," but Swann suggests that such an anarchism must either appeal to universalism or risk collapsing into moral relativism. Franks and his colleagues may yet find a third way, but Swann's critique provides the important service of identifying the current limits of practical anarchism.

Thomas Nail's remarkable essay argues that, having already established itself as a valid political philosophy, post-@ must now find a way to engage with the *actual* post-capitalist and post-statist society which is already coming into existence before our very eyes! Nail interprets Zapatismo as another kind of Deleuzian machine, the "abstract machine." This machine is a self-initiating political arrangement which requires no preconditions other than itself. As Nail convincingly argues, such machines indicate that the post-anarchist revolution has already happened.

Simon Choat performs the extremely valuable task of reinterpreting post-anarchism from a Marxist perspective. As he correctly points out, early post-@ was theoretically fragmented. May, Newman and I all had different names for this thing we now call post-anarchism. Newman recognized the importance of Lacanian psychoanalysis, while I, at first, did not. (I have since tried to correct that oversight; cf., Call, 2011a.) Choat demonstrates that opposition to Marxism was fundamental to the original articulation of post-anarchism. But he also shows the danger of such opposition. It may be that there is a kind of anti-essentialist Marxism which is compatible with post-structuralism and therefore with post-anarchism as well. So while Choat is right to say that ten years ago I feared the colonizing tendencies of Marxist theory, I don't fear Marxism any more. Post-anarchism today is too mature and too strong to be threatened by Marxism, and we should welcome theoretical allies wherever we can find them.

I am especially happy to see that this issue contains a couple of queer interventions. Mohamed Jean Veneuse offers a groundbreaking account of transsexual politics in the Islamic world. Veneuse makes it clear that the figure of the transsexual can radically destabilize essentialist concepts of gender; what's more, Veneuse identifies the benefits which this destabilization might offer to anarchism. The rejection of fixed identities and binary concepts of gender suggests that gender might be better understood as a project of becoming. By viewing gender more as a verb than a noun, we avoid the authoritarianism of stable subject positions. This project has clear affinities with post-@.

Meanwhile, Edward Avery-Natale offers a very different kind of queer anarchism. Avery-Natale shows how Black Bloc anarchists who might normally identify themselves as straight can temporarily and tactically embrace a queer subject position. This suggests that "queer" has become much more than a sexuality. "Queer" now names a subject position so flexible that it threatens to reveal the emptiness of subjectivity itself. Subjectivity then collapses into what Avery-Natale, following Giorgio Agamben, calls the "whatever-singularity." Queerness here refers to the negation of identity itself. Again, this project is entirely compatible with post-@. Post-anarchism shares with the "queer" Black Bloc the goal of destroying not just capital and the state, but the "anarchist subject" as such. In the words of Alan Moore's anarchist freedom fighter V, "Let us raise a toast to all our bombers, all our bastards, most unlovely and most unforgivable. Let's drink their health [. . .] then meet with them no more" (Moore & Lloyd, 1990: 248).

In the long run, the interdisciplinary focus of *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* may well turn out to be its strong suit. I am delighted to see that this inaugural issue contains both anarchist architectural theory and anarchist film criticism. Alan Antliff gives us a fascinating study of Adrian Blackwell's "anarchitecture." Blackwell's architecture attempts to engineer a radical perspective shift which might render static power relations more open and fluid. The result, as Antliff compellingly argues, is a unique form of anarchist architecture which refuses to remain trapped within the cultural logic of capitalism.

Meanwhile, Nathan Jun offers a very ambitious anarchist film theory, one which undertakes to reveal the "liberatory potential of film." Echoing (once again) Gilles Deleuze, Jun argues that a "genuinely nomadic cinema" is not only possible but inevitable, and that such a cinema will emerge at the juncture between producer and consumer, while blurring the distinction between the two. One need only look at the viral proliferation of quality amateur video productions on YouTube and other sites for evidence that this is already happening.

That just leaves three wild essays, one of which contains within itself (in proper fractal fashion) "Three Wild Interstices of Anarchism and Philosophy." Alejandro de Acosta suggests that anarchism "has never been incorporated into or as an academic discipline" — though I would hasten to add, it's certainly not for lack of trying. De Acosta makes anarchism's apparent theoretical weakness into a virtue, arguing that anarchism really matters not as a body of abstract theory,

but as a set of concrete social practices. De Acosta offers provocative examples of these practices: the meditative affirmations of the "utopians," a speculative anthropology of geographical spaces, and a Situationist psychogeography.

These last two "wild styles" dovetail nicely with the concerns of Xavier Oliveras González, who gives us a dramatic critique of statist metageography, and simultaneously suggests an alternative. Oliveras shows the power of the high-level assumptions we make about geographic space and the ways in which it can be organized. Whoever controls metageography controls the territories it defines, and so far the state has controlled these things. But anarchist geographers like Kropotkin have been critiquing this statist metageography for over a century now. As Oliveras demonstrates, it is now possible, at last, for us to imagine a metageography which will be liberated from statist assumptions.

Finally, Erick Heroux offers us a very useful "PostAnarchia Repertoire." Heroux thinks through the implications of today's postmodern networks. These networks feature extensive cooperating techniques which directly implement the anarchist principle of mutual aid. Shareware, freeware and open source software represent clear alternatives to the economic logic of capitalism. Like Thomas Nail, Heroux suggests that we are no longer anticipating a future postanarchist revolution. Rather, we are studying the emergence of "an actual postanarchist society."

So this is post-anarchism today. We offer no more visions, no more predictions, no more half-baked utopian dreams. Post-anarchism today describes the world we actually live in. It offers innovative, effective strategies for us to understand that world and engage with it. For a philosophy that was built, in part, on the renunciation of reality, post-anarchism has become surprisingly real. So use it and re-use it. Apply it and deny it. Revise it and recycle it. Let it speak to you, my fellow anarchists, and make it listen to you. Post-anarchism may not be here to stay, but it is here now, and anarchism is richer for that.

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