

Questioning Postanarchism in the Age of Security¹

Introduction

Anarchism was not a major concern for political theory/philosophy² from the 1930s to the fall of the Berlin Wall.³ It was only with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and correspondingly the decline in the hegemonic primacy of orthodox Marxism that other radical socialist movements, including anarchism, have been (re-)discovered. With the renewed interest in anarchism, there has also been a small, but significant departure, with the development of an identifiable 'postanarchist' movement, which includes most prominently Lewis Call, Todd May and Saul Newman, polemicists such as Bob Black and Hakim Bey, many of the post-millennial contributors to the Institute for Anarchist Studies, *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory* and journals such as *Anarchist Studies*. Articles informed by postanarchism can be found in Jonathan Purkis and James Bowen's recent collection *Changing Anarchism* and defenders of postanarchism appear on bulletin-boards and discussion groups.⁴ This 'cottage industry in "Post-Anarchism"'⁵ is the product of artisans working individually, and collectively, through associations like the Anarchist Academic Network and the newly established Special Group for the Study of Anarchism. There is also a useful collation of key authors on the 'what is postanarchism?' website (Anonymous₁, 2006).

The emphasis in postanarchism has been on a rejection of essentialism, a preference for randomness, fluidity, hybridity and a rejection of vanguard tactics, which include a critique of occidental assumptions in the framing of anarchism.⁶ Despite many excellent features of postanarchist writings, not least their verve, sophistication and their opening up of new terrains for critical investigation and participant-research, there are, nonetheless, a number of concerns which this paper is designed to articulate

¹ My thanks to Lesley Stevenson for her careful reading and pertinent suggestions and to Stuart Hanscomb for his supportive advice.

² Alan Brown, for instance, considers political philosophy to differ from political theory, as the first concerns finding rational grounds for accepting the latter (Brown, 1986: 14), and thus leaves open the possibility that political theories are merely irrational assemblages. This, however, mistakes the practice of political theorising for the reified object being studied. Brown's account of political philosophy provides an excellent account of what has constituted the discipline for much of the twentieth century in the Anglo-American context, but would not fit with practices on other continents or indeed with some of the major philosophers from other eras. Consequently, Paul Kelly's account is possibly more accurate, he argues that the distinction between political philosophy and political theory is 'an institutional one: political philosophers are political theorists employed by philosophy departments and political theorists are political philosophers employed within government or political science departments (Kelly, 2006: 47).

³ For instance C. E. M. Joad's 1924 text covers anarchism in as much detail as other forms of communism, and has a significant section on syndicalism. By the 1950s, '60s and '70s and '80s, however, anarchism was either limited to free market liberalism, relegated to a few marginal remarks or entirely absent. See for instance texts such as Alan Gewirth (1965), Anthony Quinton's (1985) [1967] edited collection, D. D. Raphael (1976) or Brown (1986).

⁴ See for instance Urban 75's 'Is post-anarchism a good idea?', <<http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=141865&highlight=postanarchism>>, last accessed, 26 March, 2006 and the debates on postmodernism and anarchism found on Libcom.org, <<http://www.libcom.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=8814>>, last accessed 26 March, 2006 and the The Postanarchism Listserv at <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/postanarchism>>, last accessed 26 March, 2006.

⁵ Creagh, 2006.

⁶ See Adams, nd <2004e>, see too Anderson (2005).

and help to resolve. These are to determine where postanarchism is positioned in relation to the other 'orthodox' or 'classical' versions of anarchism. This analysis will further illustrate that despite postanarchists' commitments to non-vanguard and anti-hierarchical practices, many reconstruct a strategic supremacy to particular types of action and overlook or underemphasise certain forms of oppression and resistance. These lacunae are especially relevant in the light of the current policies of dominating powers.

Anarchism

'Anarchism' as a pejorative label has been applied from everything from state-centred Maoist authoritarianism (Heathcoat Amory, 2002) to theocratic terrorism (Ali, 2005; Ghannoushi, 2005). The term has been applied by academics to – and accepted as a self-description by – an equally vast range of subjects. Thus 'anarchism' has been used in connection with diverse movements across the division, or 'unbridgeable chasm', of individualists and collectivists (see Bookchin, 1995, Chomsky, 2004: 235-36). In the individualist camp there are the egoists inspired by Max Stirner (a much admired figure for postanarchists like Newman and Call), the individualists of Benjamin Tucker and Richard Wolff, the free-market capitalists of Robert Nozick and the Libertarian Alliance. On the socialist side there are Bakuninist collectivists, the dictatorial egalitarians influenced by Michael Bakunin's one-time collaborator Sergei Nechaev, as well as the anarcho-syndicalists and anarchist communists of the main libertarian organisations of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In addition, there have been applications of 'anarchism' to strands within feminism, environmentalism and anti-colonialism, and the anarchist stances within sub-cultures, youth and otherwise, that adopt and modify the signs associated with libertarianism.

For clarity, when referring to anarchism, I shall be referring to groups and theories that largely conform to the principles identified by John Quail in his description of the early libertarian groups in Britain, namely: a rejection of the state and quasi-state forms, a rejection of capitalism, and an egalitarian concern for the interests and freedoms of others (Quail, 1978: x), usually viewed in the phrase 'that until all are free then no one is free' (Anonymous₂, 2006). In addition, one can add the oft-cited principle that the means being used must prefigure the desired ends (see Franks, 2003: 18-19; Purkis and Bowen, 2004: 220). Such principles are consistent with the rejection of mediation and a commitment to anti-hierarchical practices that are also hallmarks of postanarchism.

Postanarchisms: Poststructural or Postmodern?

Given the bewildering range of interpretations of 'anarchism' – it is hardly surprising that 'postanarchism' is also a hotly disputed term. The 'post' part of 'postanarchism' refers to either, or both, 'poststructuralism' and 'postmodernism'. These latter two headings are also problematic: as Jon Simons notes, it is not easy to divide theorists into these neatly separated categories (Simons, 2002: 16). Terry Eagleton's definition of 'postmodernism' from *After Theory* acts as a good starting point. He interprets the postmodern as:

the contemporary movements of thought which rejects totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives, solid foundations to human existence and possibility of objective knowledge. Postmodernism is sceptical of truth, unity and progress, opposes what it sees as elitism in culture, tends towards cultural

relativism, and celebrates pluralism, discontinuity and heterogeneity’
(Eagleton, 2004: 13)

Eagleton’s definition is useful in its scope as well as its brevity, historically contextualising postmodernism within the wider economic and political framework of the rise of neo-liberalism without the constraints of a competing collectivist value. However, this brief description collapses the realm of (primarily) academic theory with wider social movements and phenomena. For heuristic purposes it might be better therefore to disentangle ‘poststructuralism’ from ‘postmodernism’. The first, the preferred term for most of the leading post-anarchist theorists Call, May and Newman,⁷ is one closely associated with the writings of Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Felix Guattari, Jacques Lacan and Jean Lyotard (Call, 2002; May, 1994; Newman, 2001).⁸ The latter, ‘postmodernism’, can refer to the range of movements that adopt the tropes identified by Eagleton in the quotation above – and elsewhere in his book – namely a commitment to contingency, discontinuity, fluidity, hybridity and pluralism (Eagleton, 2004, 13, 16, 117-19). Postmodernism’s championing of polymorphous sexual identities and cultural diversity was frequently viewed as a less radical alternative to resisting hegemonic power relations and challenging material inequalities; thus postmodernists were considered more conservative than the critical theorists who preceded them (Simons, 2002: 10).

Those participating in and constructing practices consistent with postmodernism need not be informed by poststructural theory. However, those identifying, explicating (and on rare occasions) evaluating these postmodern phenomena, particularly for a largely academic audience, often apply methods, concepts and philosophical insights derived from poststructuralism. Architecture, which did much to broadcast general acceptance of the term ‘postmodernism’, provides a case in point. According to myth, the great public spectacle that announced the end of modernism and thus the start of the post-modern cultural era has been precisely timed to 15.32 on July 15 1972, when Minoru Yamasaki’s Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project in St. Louis, Missouri, was dynamited. The city authority’s highly public demolition of this massive residential project signalled the failure of grand state-funded strategies to deal with poverty, criminality and despair (Jencks, 1996: 30; Hughes, 2000: 166). The end of modernism and the arrival of the postmodern era, was not explicitly tied to the concepts of poststructural theory. The development of new architectural trends which challenged the modernist hegemony, through a celebration of chance, diversity, fragmentation and pastiche, was based on a critical stance towards Modernism’s ‘totalising’ claims. Thus these architectural developments can often be best grasped using the concepts of academic, poststructural theory (Harvey, 1996: 9, 82-83), even when, as in the case of Charles Jencks, such theorists are decried as ‘Kings in the Land of Tenured Scepticism’ (Jencks, 1996: 16).

⁷ See the title of May’s book *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* and Newman’s comments (2001: 14-15). Call’s preference is for ‘postmodernism’ to stand for ‘the philosophical or critical movement’ as against the wider cultural ‘postmodern condition’ (Call, 2002: 13). See too Purkis, 2004, 50-51).

⁸ May prioritises Deleuze, Foucault and Lyotard; Newman stresses Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault and Lacan; Call focuses primarily on Foucault and Baudrillard.

Just as the developments of the wider postmodern culture were not necessarily directly informed by poststructural theory, although such theory has latterly helped to clarify and evaluate such recent developments, so too the wider postanarchist canon often concentrates on applying anarchist principles to the contemporary, post-Puitt-Igoe cultural context, and thus to consider issues and forms of action that are thought to lie outside of traditional anarchism such as environmentalism, lesbian and gay rights and anti-nuclear campaigns (Bowen and Purkis, 2004: 5). This therefore gives rise to some distinctions within postanarchism, which are redolent of the differences within post-Marxism.

Positioning Postanarchim

Postanarchism's relationship to anarchism shares key characteristics with post-Marxism's relations to Marxism, as Newman suggests (Newman, 2003), not least a potentially bewildering mixture of dispositions, outlooks and methodologies that are present in this particular combination of prefix to the stem. Stuart Sim describes two different versions of 'post-Marxism' that could equally apply to postanarchism. For Sim, '*post-Marxism*' applies to those theories that have rejected the key concerns and methodologies of Marxism, viewing them as irrelevant, and moved beyond them, a position exemplified by Lyotard (Sim, 1998: 2 and 6). By contrast, '*post-Marxism*' attempts to update and renew Marxism by inclusion of new theoretical developments from such critical perspectives as feminism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism (Sim, 1998, 2 and 6-7). Both versions of post-Marxism run the risk of being considered 'ex-' or 'anti-' Marxist (see for instance Geras, 1998: 46 and 54). Sim, for instance, doubts whether post-*Marxism* is achievable because of a presumed 'pluralism-resistant' Marxist monism, which is ultimately authoritarian (Sim, 1998: 8-9).

Both Sim and Norman Geras question the hybrid 'post-Marxism', but for different motivations, Sim preferences poststructuralism over oppressive orthodox Marxism, while Geras, by contrast, rejects the inaccurate reductivist account of Marxism that is assumed in much poststructuralist and post-Marxists writing (Geras, 1998, 51-54). One might, therefore, add a more limited post-*Marxism*, in which one merely adapts traditional Marxist analyses to the contemporary phenomena that Marx was unable, due to historical difference, to foresee (such as internet technology, genetic modification and gender transformation). The 'post-' of 'post-Marxism' then denotes not the theoretical additions or replacements, but a resituating of Marxism within the postmodern culture.

By offering this analogy with post-Marxism, then, we can identify some distinctive and potentially problematic interpretations of postanarchism. First, a rejection of traditional anarchist concerns and the adoption of new critical approaches and tactics that lie beyond the remit of anarchist orthodoxy, using as their basis those poststructural theorists that are antipathetic to traditional anarchism. Second, the adoption into anarchism of poststructural theory to enrich and enliven exiting practices. Then finally, a postmodern post-anarchism, the reapplication of anarchist analyses and methods to the new globalized, post-Puitt-Igoe political economy, one that concentrates on the actions of oppressed subjects (whether self-identifying anarchist activists or otherwise). Call, Newman and May prioritise the theoretical

developments of poststructuralism over the postmodern,⁹ whilst sociological papers from, for instance, Karen Goaman tend to concentrate more on new social contexts such as the relatively recent phenomena of the social movements which coalesced to form anti-capitalist carnivals, whilst others such as Ian Welsh and Purkis combine the two. As a result, it is possible for commentators to slip from one presentation of postanarchism to another – presenting it at one point as a reapplication and clarification of longstanding anarchist principles, whilst at others as a development of anarchism and others as a transformation and negation – within a single paper.¹⁰

The combination of anarchism and poststructuralism is potentially less problematic than that attempted in post-Marxism. Anarchism, for the most part, has not been reduced to a single identifiable dogma with a singular strategy, in the way that orthodox Marxism has been wrongly, but popularly, condensed into a vulgar economic determinism, with the singular party-based stratagem. Libertarianism, thus, has a greater flexibility and pluralism (May, 1994: 49). Nonetheless, there are a number of significant criticisms to be assessed in connection to postanarchism, some of which are largely unsound, but some, that identify areas of weakness within certain forms of post-anarchism.

The first type of critical assessment of postanarchism, from Sasha K. Villon, Jesse Cohn and Shawn P. Wilbur, is that, in adopting a separate demarcation, it is merely claiming for itself a distinction without a difference: that anarchism and postanarchism are identical in all major respects, and in order to maintain a differentiation, postanarchists misrepresent classical anarchism, either as an essentialist philosophy or one corresponding to a Leninist economic reductivism. The second, from South Africa's Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF), takes a different approach. It maintains that there are substantial differences between anarchism and postanarchism, in which the latter is inferior, as it either recreates liberalism, or by being so wedded to postmodern cultural assumptions, it is incapable of responding to current changes in the current political climate. My argument is slightly different, namely that certain forms of postanarchism are consistent with the most coherent forms of practical 'classical' anarchism. Whilst postanarchism has highlighted some weaknesses in certain forms and traditions within anarchism, and reapplied anarchism to new social forms, it is often less adequate at developing a cogent account of oppression, prioritising its own institutional outlook and discourse over that of other subject identities.

Distinction without difference

In a review of Newman's influential postanarchist text *From Bakunin to Lacan*, Villon identifies Newman's text with the type of postanarchism that corresponds to the *post*-Marxism described by Sim, with a surpassing of anarchism (a

⁹ Newman for instance refers to postanarchism as constructing an intersection between anarchist and poststructuralist discourses (Newman, 2004). Dewitt sees it as a 'grafting [of] French poststructuralist thought onto anarchism' which May believes still maintains an anarchist framework (DeWitt, 2000).

¹⁰ See for instance Purkis, 2004, who views 'postanarchism' as both a reapplication of key anarchist themes to the contemporary setting (Purkis, 2004: 25), but also as an 'evolution'; that is to say postanarchisms are more higher developed variants, which junk an inappropriate Marxism (Purkis, 2004: 24-25). Such confusion may be because the main intent of the text is not to theoretically locate postanarchism, but to concentrate on describing the main features or applications of postanarchisms to assist practical struggles. By way of self-criticism, my book *Rebel Alliances*, probably fails to make clear its position in this regard and for the same reason.

transcendence), rather than its mere reapplication or updating. Newman's account of his own position is more complex and potentially more perplexing; he claims that anarchism would 'greatly benefit' from the adoption of poststructuralism, and argues that postanarchism also actually represents a 'new paradigm', one that is no-longer wedded to a 'limited [...] Enlightenment humanism' (Newman, 2003). This is resolved by claiming that postanarchism is an attempt to salvage the 'central insight' of classical anarchism, expressed as: 'the autonomy of the political', resistance to hierarchical control in all its myriad forms (Newman, 2003). This is distinguished from classical anarchism, because, according to Newman, it is wedded to a limited epistemology that concentrates on only limited domains of power.

Classical anarchism is, then, for Newman an inherently authoritarian movement, because of its epistemological weakness. This deficiency – namely that there is an ideal form of the individual, which grounds the classical anarchist project – is, he argues, one common to other Enlightenment political theories (Newman, 2001: 38-49; Newman, 2003). This is a view also shared by May (1994: 63-65). By viewing the individual as *naturally* rebellious (Bakunin) or co-operative (Kropotkin), then this predetermined trait limits freedom, fixing the ideal for all humanity, and restricts legitimate political action to opposing power in order to allow the expression of 'natural goodness'. It recreates, as Villon notes, a strategic 'Manichean' battle between the forces of good (nature) and those unnatural powers (state or capitalism) seeking to subvert it (Newman, 2001:47-48; Villon, 2003). Thus, the old conflicts, as identified by Newman, of state versus individual (Bakunin) or proletariat and capitalism (Marx), are not only outmoded but recreate hierarchies, in which certain subject identities take priority in the battle for liberation (Newman, 2001: 23-29).

Villon's contention is that Newman, and by implication Call and May, has misrepresented classical anarchism as wedded to a primitive essentialism. Villon argues such a position is not common, nor critical to all classical anarchisms, and as a result postanarchism is not distinct from them. Villon's contention is that Newman's selection of the quotations from Kropotkin, Bakunin and Godwin is too selective and de-historicized and that there are interpretations of Kropotkin that view him as 'break[ing] human nature open with his critique' (Villon, 2005).¹¹ William Godwin too is quoted by Cohn and Wilbur as explicitly rejecting an essentialist account of agency and that 'ontologically [...] all that Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin really require [is]: the *possibility* of free co-operation' (Cohn and Wilbur, 2003, emphasis added). Anarchism does not require a metaphysical fixed certainty which postanarchism is required to undermine. Whilst there are examples of essentialism in anarchism which are worthy of criticism, this does not represent the whole non-postanarchist libertarian canon, nor the varied politics of 'classical' anarchism. Indeed, one can equally find essentialisms reappearing in certain postanarchist texts. For instance, in Purkis and Bowen's collection there are references to both 'inherent creative' and 'critical' defining human traits (Gore, 2004: 156 and 146), or appeals to a shared humanity which 'anti-capitalism' resists (Q. Graeber, Goaman, 2004: 165).

¹¹ Cohn and Wilbur contribute to this critique of Newman (but also May and Call) by arguing that the selection of theorists is too narrow, omitting those authors like Gustav Landauer and Emma Goldman who do not fit neatly into the postanarchist framework for earlier 'anarchism' (Cohn and Wilbur, 2003).

Strategies and agents

Most postanarchists are united in a rejection of the strategic thinking and political action that they identify in classical anarchism. Postanarchists concentrate on fluid political alliances and changeable social identities that come into conflict with hierarchical power. Referencing Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's rhizome metaphor from *A Thousand Plateaus*, postanarchists argue that there is no fundamental origin or essence to oppressive power, but a multitude of intersecting hierarchical practices. Like a rhizome, power works through 'connection and heterogeneity' (difference). Its roots intersect and sometimes merge (Deleuze and Guattari, 1998). Consequently, as multiple forms of power do not operate uniformly, or to the same degree at different points, different political identities develop (Bowen and Purkis, 2004: 14; Call, 2002: 1 and 123-24; Gordon, 2005: May, 1994: 96-97; Newman, 2001: 105-07; Purkis, 2004; 50).

The rhizomic analysis proposes that there is no central political struggle, nor a universal group that represents all struggles. This, postanarchists claim, distinguishes their transcendent theory from classical anarchism. Classical anarchism, they claim, regards one set of oppression as the major origin of all types of domination, and thus prioritises one type of oppressed agent's struggle over other forms of oppression. In the eyes of postanarchists, classical anarchism privileges singular oppositions, either the fight against the state or workers opposition to capitalism (May, 1994: 43; Morland, 2004: 37; Newman, 2001: 106-09; Purkis, 2004; 50).¹²

Again following the critical route of Villon, Cohn and Wilbur, one could point to those aspects of classical anarchism which do not identify a singular source to all oppressions, nor place strategic centrality on a sole agent of change. Emma Goldman, for instance, on occasion, prioritised sexual dynamics (Goldman, 1969 [1911]), the early Jewish immigrant anarchists, *Der Arbeiter Freund* (The Workers' Friend) set up cultural and self-educational groups and confronted religious hierarchies (see for instance Fishman, 1975) There is a significant environmental disposition which characterises Kropotkin's works and remains central to the 'workerist' Murray Bookchin. These other concerns were intercut with, but not reducible to, the larger scale, economic campaigns. As Jean Grave suggested well before the First World War:

Society teems with abuses; against each abuse, there must rise up that group of those who suffer most from it in order to combat it.... Not only groups struggling against that which exists, but attempts to group together along the lines of the future, with a view to producing faith, well-being, solidarity, among like-minded individuals (Q. Grave in Miller, 1984, 131).

The earlier 'classical' anarchists tended not to be the economic determinists portrayed by many of the postanarchists. As such Newman's 'salvaging' of anarchism is not only unnecessary, but potentially misleading, for anarchists, both classical and contemporary, were centrally concerned with economic conflict for good reason: class domination, in the domains they operated within, was (and is) one of the major forms of control.

¹² For example of the state-centred approach look at, for instance, Alan Carter (2000) for an example of an anarchist class-centred analysis, see for instance Yaroslavsky (2006) [1937].

As ZACF indicate, postanarchists, in an effort to distinguish themselves from the 'classical' versions, often ignore economic oppression and liberatory resistance to it, which by definition is class-based. Bey's denunciation of 'leftism', Bowen's claim that anarchism is not a 'class movement' (Bowen, 118) and Gordon's careful demarcation of his contemporary anarchism, marked by the influence of Foucault, from 'old-school' working class anarchism (Gordon, 2005: 76), are indicative of this trajectory in significant sections of postanarchism. So whilst oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, species or (dis-)ability are rightly highlighted in postanarchism, class is largely absent. As Call proclaims: 'Postmodern anarchism begins with a premise: a Marxist or classical-anarchist "radical" position which insists upon the primacy of economics and class analysis lacks meaningful revolutionary potential' (Call, 2002: 21). Or as Sandra Jeppesen more prosaically expresses it: 'Anarchy is not about the worker' (Jeppesen, 2004, see too Black, 1988).

Part of the reason for this denial of class as a major vector¹³ lies partly in the history of Leninist, and later Stalinist hegemony, in which the discourse of 'class oppression' was monopolised and came to symbolise state communism's official discourse, one that played an ideological function of attempting to legitimise systematic structural oppression. As Glen Rhys, writing in the late 1980s class-conscious anarchist magazine *The Heavy Stuff*, explained: 'The more talk of class struggle the more Stalinist.' (Rhys, nd [1988e]: 26).¹⁴ Goaman, similarly, associates class discourse and imagery with a macho patriarchal attitude to (anti-)political struggle (Goaman, 1995: 165-68). As a result of this patriarchal, reductivist hegemony many anarchists felt that even entering into a class-based discourse was to identify with state oppression or sexism. Another facet of the rejection of class as an explanatory category is that postanarchists are in agreement with their Leninist opponents in their interpretation of Marx.

Whilst Call, May and Newman acknowledge that there are many different interpretations of Marx, which are distinct from economic-determinist orthodoxy, they nonetheless collapse Marxism into the authoritarian Leninist tradition (see for instance Newman, 2001: 33; May, 1994: 18n), a move followed by many others influenced by postanarchism.¹⁵ However, the orthodox Marxist (Leninist) account of class based on capitalism determining class conflict (based on the highly unrepresentative 'Preface to a Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy') (Marx, 1992), runs counter to the main thrust of Marx's political writings. Marx's political project has more in common with the multiplicity and irreducibility associated with poststructuralism. The start point of *Capital* is an explanation of how individual subjects meet their innumerable and irreducible desires through a vast array of creative endeavours (use-values), but that the circuit of capital seeks to impose singular exchange values on these myriad diverse use-values (Marx, 1976, 126-28).

¹³ A term used by Alan Carter in his account of 'analytical anarchism' to describe the influence and direction of particular forms of state interest; these vectors intersect to create 'a parallelogram of forces' (Carter, 2000: 244).

¹⁴ See too Call's comments about the symbolic importance for postmodern anarchism to avoid the language of 'bourgeois political economy', in contrast to Marxism and classical anarchism (Call, 2002: 23).

¹⁵ See for instance Jeppesen's claims that it is an unquestioning axiom of postanarchism to reject Marxism in any and all forms.

Marx's account of capitalism is one which views it as neither a total system nor the sole determinant of social conflict. Indeed the very (anti-)politics of the most bitter critics and rejectionists of 'Marxism', such as Jeppesen and Black, are actually consistent with Marx. A genuinely liberatory struggle against the imposition of work, and the category of 'worker' that it creates, requires those subject to that domination to take the lead (all else would be paternalism) to overthrow the economic conditions that require work, namely – in the common era – capitalism. In other words, 'the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself' (Q. Marx and Engels, Engels, 1977 [1888]: 20).

The postanarchist rejection of 'class', with its Leninist overtones, is understandable in creating an important distance from the Leninist legacy, and those sections of anarchism which followed such a totalistic discourse. However, in doing so it risks ignoring not only the extremes of economic oppression that continue in both the occidental and oriental domains, but also the more sophisticated and wide-ranging forms of economic oppressions and class dynamics which take place beyond the realm of immediate production. Deleuze and Guattari in their powerful metaphor acknowledge that in some contexts there are more powerful encoding structures. Flows are not equal in force, as their example of the Amsterdam canal system indicates: at some points certain stem-canal are more significant than others (Deleuze and Guattari, 1998: 15).

Thus, those aspects of classical anarchism which appear to prioritise class struggle, might do so, not because they are arguing that all oppressions are reducible to those of class, but those in the contexts in which they found themselves and operated, class was the dominant form of hierarchical power. Thus, the most significant struggles for the early Eastern European anarchists it was the struggle against Tsarist serfdom (Fishman, 1975), in the West it was the imposition of the law of value in the form of industrial capitalism (Fishman, 1975 and Rocker, 1956) and in the colonised regions, it was the struggle against imperial conquest (Anderson, 2005). To reject class as the universal and all-encompassing characteristic, should not necessarily entail ceasing to recognise its continuing importance in most contemporary social struggles. Many of the forms of creative resistance that postanarchists have participated in, reported on, and assessed, still have class as a crucial feature (even if it is not an all-determining one). After all, the movement upon which postanarchists as a whole have concentrated upon, is referred, to by both activists and commentators (the two need not be distinct), under the blanket description 'the *anti-capitalist* movement'.

The failure to acknowledge class alongside other dynamics can lead to the reconstruction of hierarchies. The celebration of marginal and diverse sexual personae, or hybrid sexual identities, is not in-itself a radical response to all forms of oppression. Capitalism, as Eagleton suggests, prefers fluidity and adaptability. As the libertarian socialist Maurice Brinton acknowledges, sexual liberation, on its own, seldom undermines the rule of capital. Instead it has opened up markets for new commodities (Brinton, 2004: 167).

Elitist agents of change

A more significant potential weakness, is that, inadvertently, postanarchists start to prioritise certain elitist forms of resistance and agents of change. Having overlooked

workers as potential revolutionary subjects, Bey, Call and Jeppesen, in-keeping with the Deleuze and Guattari influence, promote a nomadic agent of change: ones that can disappear, who are not bound by place, or past experiences (Bey, 2003: 128, Call, 2002: 128; Jeppesen, 2004). Such fleeting, drifting individuals represent, for these three theorists in particular, the postanarchist ideal (Bey, 2003: 126; Call, 2002, 24; Jeppesen, 2004).

Yet nomadic identities prioritise specific practices and oppressed subject positions, namely those that are capable of drifting, those without responsibilities to others such as vulnerable family members, are situated economically to allow for subsistence in flight and are not subject to state surveillance. In common with Rosi Braidotti, criticism of the Deleuzian nomad, shared by Bey, Call and Jeppesen, assumes an equivalence between the classes, genders and (dis)abilities, that is little different to the gender-, race-, class and (dis)ability blind- abstract agent of liberalism. It overlooks the different socio-historical constructs that create individuals, and thus acquiesces to hierarchical practices based on these constructions (Braidotti, 1993, 49).

The characterless, abstract nomads also provide no basis for actual solidarity and mutual support; instead, like Stirner, they appear to favour egoistic rebellion in favour of social action. This rejection of the principle of concern for the interests and freedoms of others, as Frank H. Brooks notes, leads to the elitist implication that concentrating on the individual's own self-emancipation leaves the unenlightened to remain exploited (Brooks, 1996: 85). This creates a new type of social hierarchy, with liberated egoists at the top and the unenlightened, unliberated herd at the bottom.¹⁶

The Age of Security

To return to the conceit concerning the precise start of the postmodern era: the spectacle of the demolition of the Puitt-Igoe complex that signalled the end of the modernist era, in which, as Simon Tormey describes, the verities of welfare state were replaced by the precariousness and flexibility of the neo-liberal market economy (Tormey, 2004: 34-35). These traits were reflected in the wider culture, especially in contemporary architecture.¹⁷ If the conceit that an exact end to modernism can be accurately pronounced, then perhaps it is possible to equally accurately signal the end of the heroic phase of postmodernism, to 08:46 local time, September 11, 2001. This was the moment when American Airlines Flight 11 crashed, with such desperate consequences, into the north tower of the World Trade Center, a structure which, with unfortunate symmetry, was also designed by the architect of Puitt-Igoe, Yamasaki.¹⁸

The subsequent period has witnessed a dramatic change in the operations of power, quite to the contrary of Bey's assumption that the state 'must [...] continue to

¹⁶ One of the criticisms of postanarchism, because of its reliance on poststructural theory, has been that it privileges those already with high degrees of cultural capital (see the discussion 'Is post-anarchism a good idea?', Urban 75, <<http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=141865&highlight=postanarchism>>, last accessed, 26 March, 2006).

¹⁷ See for instance the architecture journalist Marcus Binney's account of changes to the architect's (Rogers Partnership) design of the Welsh Assembly building wrought by the requirements for greater 'security' and 'safety' after September 11, 2001 (Binney, 2006: 58) and redesign demanded of Daniel Libeskind's Freedom Tower project, at the site of the former World Trade Center, in order to ensure that 'the buildings as finally drawn are as safe from attack as possible' (Usborne, 2005, 24-25).

¹⁸ My thanks to Simon Sadler for highlighting this coincidence.

deliquesce' (Bey, 2003: 132). Rather than dissolving, the state as Newman himself acknowledges, has switched to a more oppressive paradigm, with greater centralised control, executive power and concentrated authority in the hands of military and police (Newman, 2003 and Newman, 2004). The heroic nomenclature of postmodernism, of flexibility, openness, pluralism and risk-taking, has moved towards a more politically and philosophically conservative disposition, in which the previous terminology stresses safety, security and fixed identity and shared 'universal' values. In the face of this authoritarian turn, the favoured tactic of postanarchists, seeking flight rather than contestation (Bey, 2003: 130-32; Newman, 2001: 99-100), seems inadequate.

The desire for escape from the state also influences the reluctance, in some quarters to engage in critical scrutiny of its practices, engagements and consequences.¹⁹ In the more relativistic forms of postanarchism, which Gavin Grindon identifies, in Bey's works, the evasion takes the form of viewing the state as a mere simulation (a mythic model with no connection to real powers) (Grindon, 2004:158-59). The consequence of Bey's Baudrillardian analysis is that it ignores the personal and social consequences of state power, whether they be the torture of Abu Grahیب, Guantanamo Bay, rendition flights or daisy-cutter ordinance. Thus it becomes an analysis which is indicative of a particular (rather comfortable), elite position, rather than one which seeks out alliances of the oppressed to create new, anti-hierarchical social relations.

Conclusion

Postanarchisms' great strengths have been in identifying the essentialisms and dogmatisms in classical anarchisms, opening up original areas for critical scrutiny, employing new amalgams of analysis and also reflecting on institutional research practices. However, there has been a tendency to overstress the degree of essentialism and universalism within pre-Puitt Igoe anarchisms. In addition, whilst rightly rejecting a singular source or origin for all oppression (such as capitalism), and thus eliminating a universal agent for liberation, many postanarchists reject any reference to class. This fails to recognise not only that economic forces are relevant in almost all social contexts (alongside other disciplining forces: patriarchy, racism, disablism, ageism, heterosexism etc), but also that in many terrains, class conflict may well be the dominant factor. Because of this denigration and exclusion of dominant forms of oppression amongst many (but by no means all) postanarchists, certain grounds for social solidarity and resistance are overlooked, and thus permitted to continue. In extreme cases, postanarchism leads to an abstract egoism, in which only a select few are liberated, leaving the unenlightened restrained, thereby recreating the hierarchical social relations they sought to undermine.

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¹⁹ Although it should be noted that there are some examples of highly perceptive postanarchist analyses of state techniques and strategies, see for instance (Antliff, Evran, Gemie and Milwright, 2005).

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