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OUR LOST
CONTINENT

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ANARCHIST HISTORY AND ANARCHIST IDENTITY

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The Era of Anarchy, 1840-1880April, 2015

I—Our Lost Continent

The "lost continent" of anarchist history has been there all along, not so much lost but rather willfully ignored or dismissed, a blank spot on our map marked, not with some dire warning of the "Here be dragons" variety, but rather with the dismissive "Here be precursors." The problem is that our attempts to simply sail around most of the period between 1840, when we can unquestionably say that there were *anarchists*, and 1880 or so, when we can point with equal confidence to the emergence of *anarchism* in one or more forms, tend to commit us to a history—and a vision of "the anarchist tradition"— that is both inaccurate and unhelpful.

I no longer feel the slightest hesitation in declaring that there was, in that forty-year period, what we might call an Era of Anarchy, during which a wide variety of anarchist philosophies developed and subsequently declined. Proudhon launched the era with his explicit declaration—"I am an anarchist!"— in 1840, but he wasn't alone for long. The communists of l'*Humanitaire* identified the "anarchistic" roots of their approach the following year. We can argue about how anarchistic other communists of the period were, but certainly by the 1850s, Joseph Déjacque had explicitly joined communism to the anarchy of Proudhon—running ahead of nearly all his contemporaries in proposing some form of *anarchism* and launching the sort of internal struggle that would mark the whole of the post-1880 Era of Anarchism. There were individualists as well, including Josiah Warren, whose dislike of labels kept him from identifying as an anarchist, and Anselme Bellegarrigue, who looks, in contemporary terms, like some sort of left-wing market anarchist. Stirner is there, with his anarchistic egoism. Ernest Coeurderoy dreams of cossack invasions. Virtually every radical current from the revolutions of the late 18th century or the "utopian" period of the early 19th century manifests some more-or-less libertarian extreme. In North American, Calvin Blanchard announces Art-Liberty, Eliphalet Kimball publishes his *Thoughts on Natural Principles*, and antinomian principles bubble up, over and over again, on the fringes of New England's religious culture. Proudhon, Pierre Leroux and New England transcendentalism unite in the work of William B. Greene. Activity in the anti-slavery movement leads Ezra Heywood and Lysander Spooner to the most libertarian conclusions. Networks develop, formally and informally, among some of these figures and spread their influence among the working classes. The New England reform leagues, the *Association Internationale*, the *Union républicaine de langue française* and the International

Workingmen's Association represent the efforts of various of these anarchist philosophies to manifest themselves as movements in the era before anarchism was established as an ideology, or even a widely-used keyword. In the context of these attempts, new tendencies will emerge, such as the anarchistic collectivism of Bakunin and his associates and a revived anti-state communism, which will reject the term *an-archy* because of its associations with Proudhon.

Make no mistake: the various anarchist philosophies and movements that existed for a time in this earlier period were indeed not the sort of mass movement that histories like *Black Flame* have sought. They differed organizationally, and they were born in radically different ideological contexts than the anarchisms of the 1880s. If we insist on defining anarchism as narrowly as those historians, then there are good reasons to consider virtually everything before the establishment of the Black International in 1881 as precursors—and to pick and choose very carefully among the contenders for the anarchist label in the years that followed. But there are, I think, plenty of reasons to reject that particular definition. When we look at the later era, we find that one of the early developments was a questioning, even by those firmly committed to communism and working-class organization, of the vision of revolutionary change embedded in the organizational model. Along with their emphasis on our inability to forecast future institutional forms, the "without adjectives" school also questioned whether the emphasis on the rising of the proletariat was perhaps not already an outdated strategy, better adapted to struggles from the earlier era. On this point, Max Nettlau, arguably the finest of our anarchist historians, produced a number of thought-provoking interventions. And if there is the possibility that the strategies appropriate to the era of the Paris Commune were of questionable use within a decade or two, how much farther are we from their conditions now? When we shift registers, and compare our beliefs about concepts like the relationship between individuals and collectives, can we ignore the possibility—raised provocatively, if not always usefully, by the post-anarchists—that our worldview differs from that of, say, Kropotkin in ways that we dare not ignore?

We seem doomed, at least for now, to some sort of rough-and-ready periodization of our early anarchist history, which has to serve as origin and foundation for a movement, as well as fodder for historical explorations. Perhaps the first step to a more nuanced approach is to at least redraw the dividing lines. Instead of lumping most of our pre-Spanish Civil War history under the label of "classical anarchism," let's acknowledge the fairly significant patterns of development that seem to exist in that era. As a first step, let's recognize the rather dramatic disconnect—in terms of individuals, organizations, concepts and bodies of thought—that existed between the period between 1840 and 1880 and the period that followed the organizational efforts of 1881. That break was not complete, of course, but it was significant. We might break down that early era again, perhaps, around the time of Proudhon's death and the birth of the International. But that is, I think, a harder divide to

identify clearly, and one which we will only precisely understand as we begin to look carefully at this Era of Anarchy with fresh eyes.

II—The "Benthamite" anarchism and the origins of anarchist history

There is, perhaps, healing for some of our divisions to be found, a little farther down this road. But it is probably necessary, first, to take an unusually clear look at some of the wounds that that have served as foundations for our tradition. Wounds and foundations—wounds as foundations—that's metaphor-mixing worthy of a Joseph Déjacque, but it also cuts directly to a fundamental problem with anarchist history and tradition: the extent to which organized *anarchism* and explicitly *anarchist history* both emerged as distinctly partisan affairs, both built upon and set against the *an-archy* of the earliest anarchists.

"*Them's fightin' words...*," you might well say, and indeed they are, but it's a very old fight and, strangely enough, we seem to have nearly all been on the same side of it, regardless of our others differences. I am not suggesting that modern anarchists have been divided around this opportunist, love-hate relationship with the anarchy or anarchies of the earliest era. Instead, I'm suggesting that one of the reasons our divisions have been so troublesome is the fact that a conflicted, possibly incoherent relationship between our own anarchisms and the philosophies of that Era of Anarchy is the very thing that has held us together—for better and for worse.

One of the consequences of proposing this initial Era of Anarchy—and, I must admit, one of the motives for proposing it at this moment—is that the question of succession, from *anarchy* to *anarchism*, has to be raised, and the usual developmental account that makes up the basis of the "anarchist tradition" has to be at least reexamined. The diversity of the earlier period (complete, as it was, with positions at least analogous to virtually every modern school not specifically linked to technological advances, including the anti-state capitalists), the largely unexplored depths of the various writers and tendencies, and the relative lack of carry-over, even in the realm of memory, fit poorly into the story we have so often told of a progressive development from *mutualism* through *collectivism* to *communism*. But so do some of the earliest accounts we have given of the emergence of what Kropotkin called "modern anarchism," accounts which have arguably played an important role in the emergence of a specifically anarchist history.

Take, for example, Kropotkin's 1880 essay "On Order." I must confess that this has become one of my very favorite bits of partisan polemic, at the same time that I consider it symptomatic of something very harmful embedded very near the core of the "anarchist tradition." The whole essay is worth reading. In it Kropotkin takes up an already very familiar theme—the relationship between anarchy and order—that had already occupied anarchists like Proudhon and Bellegarrigue. In his conclusion on that score, he is in some regards quite orthodox. In *The General Idea of the Revolution*, Proudhon recognized that there

is a "so-called public order" that is "only anarchy, corruption and brutal force," just as there is a just, free order that is best recognized as "anarchy." (This is the jumping-off point for my ongoing series on "Anarchy, in All its Senses.") Bellegarrigue had argued that "anarchy is order" and "government is civil war." Kropotkin, wishing to answer those who reproach anarchists "for accepting as a label this word *anarchy*, which frightens many people so much," pointed to a similar inversion of concepts in the political world—and in that he simply returned to a familiar analysis—but he also wanted to make a point about the emergence of the "modern anarchism," founded by Bakunin, which he saw as emerging from the struggle between libertarian and authoritarian factions in the International. Observing that "a party representing a new tendency, seldom has the opportunity of choosing a name for itself," he claimed that:

> It was the same with the anarchists. When a party emerged within the International which denied authority to the Association and also rebelled against authority in all its forms, this party at first called itself federalist, then anti-statist or anti-authoritarian. At that period they actually avoided using the name anarchist. The word an-archy (that is how it was written then) seemed to identify the party too closely with the Proudhonists, whose ideas about economic reform were at that time opposed by the International. But it is precisely because of this—to cause confusion — that its enemies decided to make use of the name; after all, it made it possible to say that the very name of the anarchist proved that their only ambition was to create disorder and chaos without caring about the result.
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> The anarchist party quickly accepted the name it has been given. At first it insisted on the hyphen between an and archy, explaining that in this form the work an-archy — which comes from the Greek — means "no authority" and not "disorder"; but it soon accepted the word as it was, and stopped giving extra work to proof readers and Greek lessons to the public.
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> So the word returned to its basic, normal, common meaning, as expressed in 1816 by the English philosopher Bentham, in the following terms: "The philosopher who wished to reform a bad law", he said, "does not preach an insurrection against it…. The character of the anarchist is quite different. He denies the existence of the law, he rejects its validity, he incites men to refuse to recognize it as law and to rise up against its execution". The sense of the word has become wider today; the anarchist denies not just existing laws, but all established power, all authority; however its essence has remained the same: it rebels — and this is what it starts from — against power and authority in any form.

It's a really fascinating story, full of interesting rhetorical twists. The (modern) anarchists had their name imposed by antagonists within the International, who called them the name associated with the Proudhonists, who were "opposed by the International," and did it in order to cause confusion, both, it seems, between the soon-to-be anarchists and the Proudhonists and between the ideas of the libertarian faction and disorder. Unlike Proudhon, who seems to have imposed the troubling label on himself, these new anarchists made the best of the charge that they were like, well..., that they were like anarchists! Taking the label from the "opponents" of the International—otherwise known as *founders* of the International—was a matter of taking one for the team. And just in case we had any doubts that Kropotkin's anarchism might still be the spawn of Proudhonism, he gave an alternate origin for the "basic, normal, common meaning" of the term "anarchist," tracing it back to the anti-revolutionary writings of Jeremy Bentham.

Kropotkin apparently had a forgiving memory of Bentham's comments on the French Declaration of Rights, which paints the "anarchists" of the French Revolution in the most unflattering tones:

[S]uch is the difference—the great and perpetual difference, betwixt the good subject, the rational censor of the laws, and the anarchist—between the moderate man and the man of violence. The rational censor, acknowledging the existence of the law he disapproves, proposes the repeal of it: the anarchist, setting up his will and fancy for a law before which all mankind are called upon to bow down at the first word—the anarchist, trampling on truth and decency, denies the validity of the law in question,—denies the existence of it in the character of a law, and calls upon all mankind to rise up in a mass, and resist the execution of it.

And

"Cruel is the judge," says Lord Bacon, "who, in order to enable himself to torture men, applies torture to the law." Still more cruel is the anarchist, who, for the purpose of effecting the subversion of the laws themselves, as well as the massacre of the legislators, tortures not only the words of the law, but the very vitals of the language.

But the end-run around Proudhon—and all the rest of our Era of Anarchy—is served in either case.

It's all really rather delicious, in a rather *trollish* sort of way. It was not, of course, an account that could survive in quite so scurrilous a form, and it is quite likely that part of what seems like outrageous, partisan revision was actually the result of a real ignorance of much of what anarchists had done and believed in the earlier period. Subsequent versions of this origin story for

"modern anarchism" soften the stark distinctions between the partisans of anarchism and "the Proudhonists," but the general shape and sense of the narrative should be recognizable to just about any modern student of anarchism.

For us—the modern students of "anarchy," of "anarchism," of "anarchist history" and of "the anarchist tradition"—the mix of ignorance and audaciousness, whatever the actual proportions of each, should probably inspire a range of responses. Of those, I would hope that the sectarian impulses will be the most muted, both because, hey, this is an old, old gambit, which never entirely succeeded, and because it seems quite possible that really digging around in this old would might allow us to get at some things that have poisoned us in various ways for a long time.

III—New Uncertainties and Opportunities

Having identified our "Era of Anarchy," and recognized some of the ways in which the anarchist history and tradition we have inherited have obscured and distorted that early era, we have to be careful not to simply replace the old distortions with new ones. The difficulty is that we are products, as well as inheritors, of that history and tradition, and the way in which we "are anarchists"—the range of possible meanings accessible to us for the phrase "I am an anarchist"—is inevitably shaped by that fact. None of us will ever repeat Proudhon's experience of making that declaration for the first time, and trying to make it mean something in a political landscape without clear precedents for it. Instead, all of us face the very different challenge of making the declaration mean something concrete and individual, in the face of so many similar attempts and so many ideological pressures to make our own meanings fall in line with this or that existing tendency. We may choose to identify more with *anarchy* than *anarchism*, but that is almost inevitably a response to the fact that anarchism, as an *ideology* or *system*, is so inescapably a part of our political reality. We may share a great deal with those early proponents of a "pre-anarchism" anarchy, but our experience of asserting those shared elements is likely to be very different.

If we're going to avoid new distortions, we should take our time and explore the possible depths of our differences. Having underlined the disconnections between eras, one of the questions we have to ask is whether perhaps even identifying the period from 1840 to 1880 as an "Era of Anarchy" is a bit too presentist. Having called part of our own foundation into question, it hardly seems useful to stop short of a full inspection. That's why "Anarchy, in All of its Senses" is likely to end up a book-length monograph, why an "alternate historiography" project like "The Great Atercratic Revolution" has seemed at least potentially useful, and why it may be worth going to some potentially extreme lengths to determine if even identifying the earlier era with anarchy is a move more beholden to ideological than historical concerns.

If we are going to explore our "lost continent," we might as well make the most of it, have some fun and see what we can see that we haven't seen before. Having determined that we are at least a bit wrong about our origins, there's something to be said for doing our best to correct that state of affairs. And once we start looking closely at the details, all sorts of curious things emerge. In the midst of trying to work out just what Proudhon meant when he first said "je suis anarchiste," I was struck by the fact that I cannot even be absolutely sure whether, in that original context, "anarchiste" is best read as a noun or an adjective. It's not the sort of thing that ought to keep us up at night, but it might be useful to consider, in the context of contemporary debates about identity, what it might mean to "be anarchist," without necessarily "being *an* anarchist," and how relations between what we might call "the anarchist" (when opting for the adjectival reading, and with echoes perhaps of constructions like *Die Freien*) or "the anarchistic" might differ with those among anarchists. There are historical reasons to emphasize all the elements in Proudhon which resist or deny simple conceptions of identity, as we search for the real content of his thought and shape of his method, and, once we have acknowledged this much, we are encouraged to ask whether Proudhon's use of multiple keywords to identify the elements of his project really represents a problem or inconsistency—as has often been claimed—or whether the problem is largely interpretive, a matter of our own choice of keywords and interpretive lenses.

Without getting too lost in details that I'm still ferreting out, I think we can safely say that "anarchy" did not have the same primacy for Proudhon that it does for us, that "anarchist" is probably a simpler sort of identity for us than it could have been for him, and that we are perhaps a bit quick to read terms like "mutualism" as designating *ideologies*, when they may well just indicate *categories of relations*. I want to tackle the question of "science" in a separate post, but let's just note here that Proudhon had something rather specific, and in some senses quite radical, in mind when he proposed his form of scientific socialism. So perhaps one of the reasons that we do not find a treatment of "anarchism," or a more systematic treatment of "federalism" or "mutualism," is his works is his anarchistic resistance to systems, and one of the sources of his various terminological variations is his commitment to experiment.

From a present perspective, we know that *anarchy* and *anarchist* were the enduring keywords of the era, and we know it because they are the ones that we have adopted. We have Kropotkin's story of the adoption, in which the absence of Proudhon plays such a prominent role. Behind it, we have the testimony of Bakunin, widely recognized as the founder of "modern anarchism," that he, at least, despite differences on that question of science, acknowledged Proudhon as a source. Bakunin's Proudhon was the one who "adored Statan and proclaimed anarchy," an individual notable more for revolutionary zeal than for social-scientific prowess, a figure as unfamiliar in many ways as the historical Proudhon—the social scientist, political prisoner and exile, who wrote more than fifty volumes of theory and correspondence—but also very clearly not quite that

historical figure. For better of worse, reconstructing the development of anarchist ideas and vocabularies through these formative years commits us to a very complicated project, where both historical facts and developing traditions necessarily have a place. It's not a rabbit-hole that everyone is going to be eager to fall down.

Fortunately—as I'm sure at least some readers will agree—not everyone has to risk drowning in the details in order for all of us to at least potentially benefit from the questions raised. If we acknowledge that there is an era of anarchist activity largely ignored in our anarchist histories, and recognize that at least part of the reason for that has been tendencies internal to the modern anarchist movement, which has found itself using that era of activity as both a foundation and a foil, then it is logical to ask how else we might view it, if not as a useful appendage to our own origin story. And one of the most provocative questions is probably whether or not the activity of that early era is best characterized as "anarchist." With so many concepts in play, and so many vocabularies in use, what do we gain or lose by focusing on "anarchy"? Perhaps more importantly, what might we gain or lose if some other characterization turned out to be more generally accurate? It appears that we have inherited something from a mythologized Proudhon, or a sanitized Bentham, or a slightly mistranslated Bakunin. Does any of that matter? If it doesn't matter, does our present use of history and tradition make any sense? If it does matter, what are the consequences?

Internet chat rooms are full of quibbling over the true meaning of "anarchy," with historical and lexical authority grappling endlessly, as if either mattered in some straightforward sense. If comparatively few anarchists do historical study, or even acknowledge its importance, vague references to anarchist history are among the most common maneuvers in our rhetorical toolkit—and we often resort to them when the stakes for the movement are quite high, when, for example, we are dealing with the attempts of capitalists and other authoritarians to claim that they too (or they alone) are "anarchists." There are, I think, no shortage of theoretically adequate answers to be drawn from virtually every period of our history, and recovering early anarchist writings only increases our resources, but the rote retorts that "anarchists have always…" is perhaps less serviceable as our sense of our origins becomes increasingly complex and the "verdict of history" arguments also suffer as the traditional evolutionary narrative comes under closer scrutiny.

There are opportunities for strengthening our arguments for anarchism as we deal with these newfound complexities in our history, but we will have to embrace them.

Recently, I've been looking at some very interesting work by René Berthier and Gaston Leval, some of it relating to the familiar question of just how anarchists have used the language of *anarchy* (*anarchist, anarchist*, etc.) Berthier (whose various works on Bakunin and Proudhon I have been finding very useful) has written a nice little essay on "L'usage du mot « anarchie » chez Bakounine" (The Use of the Word 'Anarchy' by Bakunin), which covers some of the same ground as my work on "Anarchy in All its Senses," but in the works of Bakunin, rather than Proudhon. Leval was contributed a more general essay, "Socialiste libertaire! Pourquoi?" (Libertarian Socialist! Why?) on his reasons for preferring that label, *socialiste libertaire* (libertarian socialist), over *anarchist*, and documenting a number of other figures associated with the anarchist tradition who shared that preference, at least at some stages of their careers.

Berthier finds that Bakunin uses the term *anarchy* in much the same way as Proudhon, seldom using it to designate (as he puts it) "a political doctrine" and frequently using it to indicate disorder. He observes a number of occasions in Bakunin's work where the positive connotations of the terms obviously depend on the fact that disorder in the existing society creates opportunities for change, not necessarily on any positive aspects of anarchy itself—but also documents a number of instances where something like the "political doctrine" he is seeking may really be in play.

Leval traces some of the same history, showing that even anarchist authors often associated the term anarchy with disorder, and invoking a series of prominent figures (Rudolf Rocker, Francisco Ferrer, Tarrida del Marmol, Gustav Landauer, etc.) who at one time or another preferred identification as some form of *socialist* to the *anarchist* label. It's an interesting account, despite some passages that look like they are reaching a bit for ideological points: Leval claims, for example, that it was Jules Guesde, Paul Brousse, and Benoît Malon who were must insistent on the *anarchist* label during the First International, and then attempts some connection between their "verbal extremism" and their subsequent "founding" of "the authoritarian socialist party." For Leval, the biggest problem with the language of *anarchy* seems to be that too many people have adopted it, and that it does not indicated clearly enough a investment in the issues he considers central.

I'm afraid that I am not ultimately very hopeful that any amount of attention to labels and keywords is going to solve any of the problems we have communicating our ideas to others. It is an open question whether *libertarian socialist* has proven any clearer, in the years since 1956, than anarchist. I also have very little investment—and some purely negative reaction—to the focus on "a political doctrine," which seems to drive both examinations of the history. Indeed, looking at the similarities between Proudhon's and Bakunin's use of the language of *anarchy*, it strikes me that someone not looking to break with that

terminology might be inclined to linger a little longer with the question of what—*other than a political doctrine*—that obviously complex term might be indicating. To put it more directly: It seems to me that a self-identified *libertarian socialist* may have fewer reasons to grapple with, or avoid grappling with, the problem of "anarchy in all its senses" than someone who identifies as an *anarchist*. Without no identification with the terminology, neither anxiety nor curiosity is likely to drive us to plumb the depths of the difficulties.

But there is another side to this issue. After all, the question of "anarchy in all its senses" has hidden in plain sight for a long time. It seems to have been obscured in the English translation of *The General Idea of the Revolution* precisely because it seemed to create confusion about a political doctrine—when the text itself suggested that a search for something else was required. But many of the questions raised during the "Era of Anarchy" work arise from the fact that we tend to see "anarchism" in periods where perhaps we should distinguish other sorts of activity in support of anarchy.

The question of the relationship between Bakunin's career and *anarchy* and *anarchism* is obviously something that I've been forced to wrestle with as the Bakunin Library comes together, and it was partially as a means of buying a bit of time that I chose to construct the collection along lines already established by Max Nettlau and James Guillaume, as a "collectivist" edition. But one of the things that I have discovered, as I've grappled with the literature on Bakunin—which always threatens to outstrip my language skills—is that much of the most useful commentary on Bakunin as an anarchist has come from scholars like Berthier, for whom the question of anarchism emerges specifically as a kind of distraction that must be addressed.

My own (anti-)political, philosophical and historiographical commitments mean that I can, at times, only follow the logic of that *libertarian socialist* scholarship *so far*. *Anarchy* is obviously an important piece of the particular puzzle I am assembling. But I am finding it a very useful foil as I am attempting to clarify my own *anarchist* account.

Joseph Déjacque and the First Emergence of "Anarchism"

One of this week's tasks was to finally go back and take a closer look at how Joseph Déjacque used the language of *anarchy* in his writings. I finally assembled a couple of text files of all the articles from *Le Libertaire* and worked through the required keyword searches. That process led me to focus on some pieces that I admit I had never read, or read closely, before and produce some new translations. I think the results are interesting and pose some new interpretive challenges.

Déjacque is notable for using the conventional anarchist vocabulary much more than most of his contemporaries, but I have been particularly interested in his use of the term *anarchisme*. I have made much in recent years of the lag between the emergence of *anarchy* as a keyword in 1840 and the eventual adoption of *anarchism* by various anti-authoritarian currents in the late 1870s, but there have always been potential problems with that account, chief among them the first emergence of *anarchism* as a keyword during Proudhon's lifetime. It seems certain that some of that part of the story is still to be told. We find an entry for *anarchisme* in the 1853 *Dictionnaire universel*, with a reference to Proudhon ("Voir *l'Anarchie* de P.-J. Proudhon, l'éminent publiciste chef de cette école.") But there are no references to self-proclaimed anarchists using the term and the dictionary provides very little clarification about the beliefs of Proudhon and his "school." In a period when so many *isms* were coined, the term would perhaps have seemed obvious to a lexicographer, even if it had not really seen much use. My own searches have still revealed no clearly *anarchist* uses of the term prior to its appearance in *Le Libertaire* on August 18, 1859, in the third part of Déjacque's "La question politique,"

This section, "Le Catholicisme. — Le Socialisme," is a fine example of Déjacque in ranting mode. He has, for example, just identified himself as a "revolutionary Satan," with "an infernal snicker for an *amen*," when he first deploys the now-famous keyword:

> The time is coming. Jesuitism and Anarchism, the extremes will meet. But it is by marching to meet one another, by clashing mortally like bulls who compete for a heifer. Which of the two will take possession of Humanity? — The old are the old and the young are the young: To the old the Past, to the young the Future!!...

So, there you have it: anarchism may well have emerged first into the world "like a bull who competes for a heifer." More importantly, of course, anarchism emerges as one of two fundamental forces in a Manichean struggle for the possession of Humanity. And that is the tone for the rest of the essay:

> If, on their side, the Jesuits have the belfry of Saint-Barthélemy, we, anarchists, have the tocsin of revolutions. To arms! in the two

camps. To arms! and let the idea cross with the idea and the iron with iron! — To arms! We fight for oppression, they say. — To arms! We, we fight for deliverance! And do not forget that those we have to combat are those who have said: "Kill, always kill..." Only, this time, it is not "God" but Humanity that will recognize its own!!

But you, bourgeois and protestants, what will become of you in this colossal brawl? There is no place for you, poor vagabonds, between the two enemy camps, that of anarchic Liberty and catholic Authority. You will be crushed, like caterpillars, beneath the feet of the terrible principles in battle. Men of the happy medium, you no longer have a reason to exist. Political constitutionalism, like religious constitutionalism; all the schisms, all the mixed heresies; the bastard reforms, part liberal, part religious; the protestant superstition and the representative superstition; everything apart from the extremes; everything that is a corruption of radical Good or radical Evil; everything that is not exclusively one or exclusively the other, pure-bred libertarian or pure-bred authoritarian; everything, finally, that has been brought into the world by a coupling of which nature disapproves, is destined for death without posterity, like the mule, that sterile product of the donkey and the horse. Your last hour has sounded, bourgeois and protestants, mules incapable of reproduction. Whether it is Jesuitism or Anarchism that triumphs, that is it for you, your elimination is assured. For neither cannot tolerate you any more than the other. — Jesuitism does not want intermediaries between it, — the sacred consumer, the holy and blessed and privileged caste, — and the immense mass of the taxable and exploitable people, the profane beast of burden, the servile and gigantic producer. Every other profession of faith but its own is a hanging offense. Anarchism, it wants no more parasites: it denies God in the heavens and on the earth; it leaves no pretext for the existence of religious or governmental superstitions; no vestige of a chance to the exploiters of all sorts; it is the envoy of equality and solidarity among men. — It is death, death for you, see it well, — whether by Authority or by Liberty. You can no longer find salvation except in metamorphosis, in transformation. — With the Anarchists, you must deny God, deny religion, deny government, deny property, deny the family, affirm the right to work, the right to love, the right to individual autonomy, to social fraternity, to all the rights of the human being; make yourselves socialists, finally. Or, with the Jesuits, you must affirm God, the Father-Master; divine right; the seigniorial rights of the clergy, the rights of *jambage* and *aubaine* pour the reverend catechizers; pay the tithe, furnish the corvée, be beaten and... content ; deny progress; deny the sciences, deny the arts and letters; cast Voltaire and the curé Meslier, Luther and Calvin in the fire; make

an auto-da-fé of all the liberal writings, of all the reformist books; and, at the least leaning towards independence, you expect to have your bones ground by torture or you flesh toasted on the pyres; finally make yourselves good catholics,... — It is all one or all the other. There is no middle ground: choose...

And admit that it is you, Bourgeois and Protestants, who have made this situation for yourselves!... Ah! How you have earned your punishment!

Who restored the Pope to his temporal throne in 1815, if not you, bourgeois protestants of England? Who restored him again in 48? Who exiled and put to death the socialists in June and in December? You again, voltairean bourgeois of France.

And what will be your recompense, bourgeois and protestants of England? — To be eliminated by those you wanted to restore!... And you, bourgeois and voltaireans of France? — To be exiled and put to death by those you wanted to eliminate!!... And do not hope to flee to America or elsewhere: — either Catholicism or Anarchism will pursue you there. There is no longer a stone on the globe where you could safely rest your head. Like Adam and Eve at the end of the terrestrial Paradise, you will be reduced for your sins to wandering naked and cursed in a vale of tears!

So metamorphose yourselves, transform yourselves, bourgeois voltaireans and bourgeois protestants. From conservative parasites become revolutionary workers: "revolutions are conservations." Remember the time, no far gone, when you were the avant-garde of Progress; when, — in the sciences and in the realm of letters, in the parliaments and in the public square, — you marched to conquer liberty. And if your disposition is no longer to occupy the first rank, know that there is still a place for the best of you in the rearguard. Do not wait to be forced by the Revolution to submit to it; for to your judaical support at the last hour, the Revolution could respond, as to all the Powers too slow to submit to it, all the deposed Powers: it is too late!!!

And we, the Proletariat, we the anarchists, we the revolutionary flesh and idea, will be let ourselves be butchered or bound in chains without defending ourselves? — Isn't it the tool that makes the bayonet? And what we have made, could we not break?... So let us rise up! And, in passing, in order to achieve it, on the guts of the emperors, it's proconsuls, let us prove to Catholic Rome that the Proletarians of today are the equals of the Barbarians of the past!!

Hurrah!! For the liberation of men and women!!!

Hurrah!! For Liberty, — individual and social liberty!!!

There are some obvious references to Proudhon here. "Revolutions are conservations" is a nod to the "Toast to the Revolution," where Proudhon said:

> Whoever talks about revolution necessarily talks about *progress*, but just as necessarily about *conservation*. From this it follows that the revolution is always at work in history and that, strictly speaking, there are not several revolutions, but only one permanent revolution.

But it is a rather partial nod, I think. There are moments, in similar contexts, when Proudhon drew stark battle lines similar to those we see here. "La question politique" starts with a discussion of Louis Napoleon's imperial ambitions and end up, by the sort of circuitous route we expect from Déjacque, at the oppositions of "catholicism — socialism" and "jesuitism — anarchism." Proudhon's responses to Louis Napoleon include some of his most stark oppositions: the choice "anarchy or Caesarism" in the conclusion of *The Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d'Etat* and the choice of "archy or anarchy, no middle ground" in the posthumously published *Napoleon III*. These, however, are theoretical lines drawn in the sand, marking clearly distinct tendencies, but not, I think we have to admit, armies in some final showdown between "radical Good" and "radical Evil."

The other obvious nod here is to Ernest Coeurderoy, who published *Hurrah!!! or Revolution by the Cossacks* in 1854. According to the program of that work, the first part of a projected trilogy, the birth of a new world of freedom would begin only with the destruction of Europe by Cossack invasion. I suppose we might think of it as an early accelerationist text, with the accelerating events being precisely the sweeping away of the very possibility of any middle ground.

There is a good deal else here that would deserve comment, from the invocation of "good versus evil" to the reference to "judaical" adherence to the revolutionary cause. References to sterile couplings as those "of which nature disapproves" can be added to our list of indications that *perhaps* Déjacque was not as clear an alternative to Proudhon where sex, gender and sexuality were concerned. We've yet to really do justice to Déjacque's thought, but it's probably useful not to wander too far afield right now.

In the next issue of *Le Libertaire* (No. 17, September 30, 1859), the term *anarchism* appears again, in much the same context:

> So, men of small liberties or great, you the lukewarm and the hot, rally, all of you, to Liberty, to complete, unlimited liberty, for apart from it there is no salvation: Liberty or death!... Rally to the only true principle. Together let us oppose radicalism to radicalism, anarchism to jesuitism, so that what the cross-bearers and sword-bearers, the bravos of the autocratic and theocratic Authority provoke as a Riot (which they strive to drown in blood and drag around in irons)

responds to them by growing to the level of the circumstances, by declaring Revolution!!! — So much for the general question.

In the essay on "Ideas" (Le Libertaire 18, October 26, 1859), there is a bit more explanation of the idea itself:

> If the ideas of the Past, uprooted ideas, still give, alas! their dead leaves, the ideas of the Future, living ideas deep-rooted in the Present, give their green buds. The fibers of Anarchism, finally feeling the atmosphere heat up around them, breaking the nets that hold them captive. They rise from their torpor, they overrun the reawakening branches of Humanity and vigorously unwind there their progressive spiral, spreading their growing veins on the brows of new generations. The ideas of twenty years ago, of even ten years ago, seem like the ideas of another century, so much has the movement of revolutionary thought, of public opinion, advanced. It is not only the form of the Royalty of the Divinity tat are attacked today, but Authority in its principle; it is Divinity and Royalty in itself and in all its metempsychoses: Duality, Paternity, Delegation, Capital; Religion, Family, Government, Property. The insurrection of ideas against the monarch of the heavens or the monarchs of the earth is no longer political; it is social! It is now no longer a revolution of paradise or palace that is necessary, it is a radical revolution, the substitution of full and complete Liberty for full and complete Authority. It says: Down with the idlers, down with the parasites; down with all who produced without consuming. Down with the heavenly master, exploiter of worlds! Down with the terrestrial masters, the exploiters of men! — What is the universal God? Everything. — What must he be? Nothing. — What is universal matter? Nothing. — What must it be? Everything. — And, fraternal insurgents, the ideas proclaim universal autonomy, the autonomy of each, the government of worlds and men by themselves, Life being Movement, Movement being the producer of Progress, and Progress being solidary and infinite in its attractions.

The term then appears again, after a hiatus of several issues, in the last two numbers of *Le Libertaire*. In the third section of "The Organization of Labor," it is once again a question of a clash between anarchy and authority, but there has been a fascinating change in Déjacque's presentation of that conflict. Back in No. 15, he had begun an essay on "Direct and Universal Legislation," which begins with the caution:

> As libertarian or anarchist as we may be, we must still live in our own century and deal with contemporary populations. We can catch a glimpse of the great and free human society [cité], the city of the

future, but we can reach it only by passing over the bodies of several generations.

This essay, which ran simultaneously with the material already cited, was then continued by "The Organization of Labor," which began with a reiteration of the defense of that "direct and universal legislation" as a transition to anarchy, followed by some reassuring words to those who fear the possible outcomes of this course of action:

I have said in the preceding articles, the universal and direct vote (not to be confused with universal and direct suffrage, which is about men and not things), the vote on measures of public necessity by each and all is, still in our days, for the individual as for the commune, as for the nation, the instrument of social revolution; it is the logical and inevitable transition from authority to an-archy. The review of the thing being voted on being permanent, and the element of progress spreading more and more each day in the masses by the exercise of the vote and the discussion that accompanies it, by the rise of insights and the generalization of acquired knowledge, it naturally follows that we will distance ourselves more and more each day from authority, in order to approach more closely each day to an-archy. Woe to the proletariat if, on these triumphant barricades, it does not know how to seize this lever of emancipation, the legislative scepter, and establish itself in a universal and provisional government. Woe to it, if it allows a new partial power to be established, a new representative dictatorship on the ruins of the one that it has overturned, though that power or dictatorship might be the most well-intentioned. The people can only progress on the revolutionary path if they are invested with a revolutionary function; every man and every woman, every infinitesimal fraction of the people must come into immediate possession of their equal part of universal sovereignty and fully enjoy their right to participate directly in the use of the common weal. Doubtless, in a milieu as corrupt and as ignorant as our own, it would be necessary to submit, to a certain degree, to the heavy pressure of a great number of the blind; but it would be necessary to submit to that pressure only conditionally, while making a constant effort to project light where darkness still reigns, and to destroy, by a philosophical propaganda, authoritarian prejudices, political and religious superstitions. If we who call ourselves anarchist-revolutionaries are really conscious of the truth of our principle, we should not fear, with this transitional system, which clings to the past through legal arbitrariness and to the future through the fraternitarian, egalitarian and libertarian exercise of our moral and intellectual faculties, to be led back to absolutism; all

the odds, on the contrary, are for anarchism. It is not in the destiny of the human being to march backwards, when Progress, spreads its wings to launch it forward.

This is perhaps not a clean break with the climactic conflict narrative, as the opposing sides still seem quite distinct, but it is hard not to think of this transitional program as a bit of a *mule*. That it is *eventually* doomed seems overshadowed by the assertion that it is essential in its specific role as "logical and inevitable" transition.

This is probably where we should review the essay on "Scandal" (*Le Libertaire* No. 4, August 2, 1858), in which Déjacque declared that there are two different approaches to promoting social change, both of which "are good and useful, depending on the sorts of listeners we encounter along our way." The key passage is probably this:

> Two manners of acting present themselves to those who want to become propagators of new ideas. One is calm, scientific discussion, without renouncing anything of principles, to report them, and comment on them with a fine courtesy and firm restraint. This process consists of injecting truth drop by drop into minds that are already prepared, elite intelligences, still beset by error, but animated by good will. Missionaries of Liberty, preachers with smiling faces and caressing voices, (but not hypocrites,) with the honey of their words they pour conviction into the hearts of those who listen to them; they initiate into the knowledge of truth those who have a feeling for it. The other is bitter argument, although scientific as well, but which, standing firm in the principles as in a coat of mail, arms itself with Scandal as with an axe, to strike redoubled blows on the skulls of the prejudiced, and force them to move under their thick covering. For those, there are no words blistering enough, no expressions cutting enough to shatter all these ignorances of hardened steel, that that dark and weighty armor that blinds and deafens the dull masses of the people. All is good to them—the sharp sting and the boiling oil—in order to make these apathetic minds tremble to their heart of hearts, under their tortoise shells, and to make resonate, by tearing at them, these fibers which do not ring out. Aggressive circulators, wandering damned and damnators, they march, bloodthirsty and bleeding, sarcasm on the lips, the idea before them, torch in the hand, across hatreds and hisses, to the accomplishment of their fateful task; they convert as the spirit of hell converts: by bite and fire.

Ultimately, however, it will probably take a closer examination of the arguments in the more "scientific" essays to determine if Déjacque's general

position shifted. What we probably can say safely right now is that he associated *anarchism* with both parts of the project.

The final appearance of *anarchism* is in the final issue of *Le Libertaire*, in the first section of an essay "On Religion" that remained unfinished when the paper ceased publication. The essay begins:

> What is Religion? What must it be?
>
> What is Religion today? It is the immutable synthesis of all errors, ancient and modern, the affirmation of absolutist arbitrariness, the negation of attractional anarchism, it is the principle and consecration of every inertism in humanity and universality, the petrification of the past, its permanent immobilization.
>
> What must it be? The evolving synthesis of all the contemporary truths; perpetual observation and unification; the progressive organization of all the recognized sciences, gravitating from the present to the future, from the known to the unknown, from the finite to the infinite; the negation of arbitrary absolutism and the affirmation of attractional anarchism; the principle and consecration of every movement in humanity and universality, the pulverization of the past and its rising regeneration in the future, it's permanent revolution.

Perhaps here we have some partial resolution of the questions just raised, if "attractional anarchism" is a principle of movement, a universal tendency that explains and "consecrates" that "permanent revolution" that we cannot help associating with Proudhon. But I'm inclined to think that at this stage, so early in the evolution of this part of the anarchist vocabulary, we are likely to find, even after we dig much more deeply into the remainder of Déjacque's works, that not all of the pieces fit neatly together.

But perhaps that should be no surprise, as it is unclear that the *second* emergence of anarchism was ever any more successful in reconciling all the tensions that emerged along with it.

Are We Anarchists by Accident?

The Great Atercratic Revolution never goes away, even if the blog goes dormant for long periods of time. It remains an important part of a series of works about what I've taken to calling the "three little words" of the anarchist tradition: *anarchy*, *anarchist* and *anarchism*. Let me review those works:

Anarchist Beginnings: Declarations and Professions of Faith, 1840-1920, which is just about finished, is an anthology that looks at how anarchists have defined their beliefs and tradition. It is a comparatively simple starting place for the larger study, simply reporting what self-identified anarchists had to say about what that identification meant during the formative years of the anarchist tradition. But it raised questions that were not so simple. In particular, it highlighted the fact that there was a long period when one of the things that "being an anarchist" *didn't* involve was a relationship to *anarchism*.

The search for the origins of the notion of *anarchism* sent me back through the works of the pioneers of the tradition, looking closely at the development of those three key terms. That work will eventually see the light of day as *Anarchy, in All its Senses*, although I'm still uncertain just what form the work will take. It is likely to be the scholarly monograph of the bunch. There is a lot of digging yet to be done, but the immediate lesson of the work done so far is that, in what I have been calling "the Era of Anarchy," not only was *anarchism* not part of the equation, but *anarchy* was not simply a positive conception. It seems clear that we are aware of the tensions in the language of that early period, but haven't quite worked out the consequences.

The work I've done on the historical origins of the anarchist tradition initially had the effect of drawing a bright line between "the Era of Anarchy" and "the Era of Anarchism,' and I think there are very good reasons to highlight the differences between the general approaches of figures like Proudhon and Kropotkin, when it comes to key concepts. And that just heightened my sense that there was space for a kind of revival of the approach characteristic of the earlier era, whether it was a neo-Proudhonian social science or something more general. But there is obvious downside to any historical narrative that suggests a really decisive break between the two eras. Fortunately, my work on collectivism, anarchism with adjectives and the disputes of the late 19th century have suggested a much more complicated transition than we usually acknowledge, leaving a lot of overlap between the tendencies associated with the two "eras." But it also raised more questions about the extent to which the *anarchism* of the later period was really a term of organizational convenience, masking really serious differences within "the movement." If we do not all seem to be "in this thing together," perhaps there are simple, historical explanations, dating back to the beginnings of "modern anarchism." And perhaps attempts to explore the relevant conflicts, like *Black Flame*, have been right to emphasize

differences, but wrong (or at least unfaithful to the history) in the way that they have separated *anarchism* from other tendencies.

If it came down to a choice between *anarchy* and *anarchism*, I would have to come down on the side of *anarchy* as a principle and goal, rather than *anarchism* as a movement or consistent ideology. And it is not uncommon to find that choice presented, either by those for whom the resistance to ideology is a particularly important priority or by those who, despite claiming the *anarchist* label, are uncomfortable with the uncertainty that naturally attaches to *anarchy*. but there is, to my mind at least, something fundamentally perverse about the attempt to clarify and unify *anarchism* by purging it of those who embrace all the uncertainties of *anarchy*, and that fundamental perversity seems like as good an explanation as any for the sorts of conflicts and problems anarchist face in the present. When I discovered that Max Nettlau's writings on *mutual toleration* and *panarchy* addressed this problem fairly directly, I was left with two basic questions, one of which concerned modern practice and one of which concerned our understanding of "the tradition."

The modern question was fairly straightforward: *Is the principle of anarchy sufficient as a goal and guide for a modern anarchist movement?* Having ultimately decided that the answer is "yes," I started working on the "propositions for discussion" that will ultimately be *Anarchism, Plain and Simple*. I think of the book as a sort of well-defined line in the sand. Hopefully, having considered the "shareable narrative" proposed, readers will be able to judge for themselves whether anarchy is really what they are after. I don't expect it will actually solve terminological problems, but I do think that it will provide a basis on which they might be resolved. It's a "no tent" resolution, rather than a big-tent attempt to minimize conflict, but minimizing conflict was not really central to anarchist thought in its origins.

The other question sets aside the problem of "the anarchist tradition" and its complicated history. That's the question posed here: *To what extent is our identification as anarchists a product of very specific conditions and what might the alternative have been?* It's a question that feels much safer to ask in the context of the "shareable narrative," but it is clearly, in its own way, at least as potentially disruptive as anything suggested in *Black Flame* or similar accounts. Digging into the history, I've been struck by how many key "anarchist" figures apparently hated the language of *anarchy*. Working the margins of "the tradition," as I so often have, it has become clear that we might assemble a collection of "anarchistic beginnings" where the language of *anarchy* was rejected or unknown. The archive is full of proposals for equitable commerce, adjuvantism, pantarchy, atercracy, art-liberty, etc., etc. And each of those more or less anarchistic proposals poses its own question: *How would "the tradition" have been different, and how would modern ideology be shaped, if some other language had been adopted as a focus for organization in the modern era?* The obscurity of some of the proposals hardly matters, at least for our thought

experiment. After all, not many of Proudhon's actual ideas were adopted along with the language of *anarchy*.

This question becomes not just interesting, but potentially important, I think, given the common indecision about whether our appeals to "the tradition" are really appeals to historical developments or to dictionary definitions, and given the overt appeals to etymology among the various entryist tendencies. Both internally and externally, what we call ourselves definitely shapes the sorts of interactions we have. If one way to help clarify the problems associated with that is to propose a narrative in which the language of anarchy works (*Anarchism, Plain and Simple*), another is to explore the alternatives and investigate just how essential *anarchy* is to what we have come to think of as "the anarchist tradition."

NOTE ON ANARCHISM AND THE RHETORIC OF DEMOCRACY

The battle over the relationship between anarchism and democracy rages on, without necessarily gaining much in clarity. It shouldn't surprise us, really. The earliest explicit proponents of anarchy had to find a way to place *anarchy* among a range of otherwise governmentalist possibilities, so we have inherited constructions like "the best form of government is that which does not govern," leaving us to figure out whether anarchy is the last form of government ("pure democracy") or the first form of something else–or whether perhaps the choice is largely rhetorical.

To be clear, I think the choice is more than rhetorical, but what if it really was just a question of what language we choose to make our appeal for truly and fully anarchic relations? What evidence do we have that the sort of move contemplated by those who want to present *anarchy* as (or at least as involving) a particularly pure form of *democracy* would work?

Here are a few thoughts from a recent Reddit exchange:

We certainly have choices about the way we use the language available to us and the tradition gives us a variety of examples of how those choices might play out. Proudhon's claim that "property is theft" is an example of making the received language work against received ideas, and one that has been fairly durable and successful. It raises a paradox, which the curious can then explore in the set of arguments Proudhon provided. Taken out of context, it at least doesn't lead anyone too far astray. Bakunin's remarks about "the authority of the bootmaker," on the other hand, has had the effect, as often as not, of making even anarchists forget the rest of what Bakunin said about authority, even just a sentence or two away from the original statement. Elsewhere in "God and the State" we have the powerful, scandalous statement that he preaches "the revolt of life against science" (the "property is theft" of the piece), which ought to send us back into the text to try to understand how this opposition plays out. But that's not the phrase that has persisted in our memory, at least in the English-speaking world, and the one that has, when taken out of context, gives no clues as to the complexities of the argument from which it is lifted.

Proudhon wrestled with the way to deal with the words he used for new forms of familiar institutions. He initially called his preferred form of property "possession," on the principle that new relations should have new names, but eventually doubled back, wanting to emphasize the evolutionary nature of the process he was describing, and so, for example, his description of the anarchic institutions of the future society retains the "patronymic name" of "State," even thought the *citizen-state* he described is perhaps even farther removed from

the governmentalist State than simple possession was from simple property. There are good reasons for the latter strategy, but the fact is that almost everyone who encounters the word "State" in the later works comes away thinking he had stopped being an anarchist.

Given all that, we might wonder why many of those some anarchists think talking in terms of "democracy" will prepare people for a new social form, rather than simply confusing everyone about what we really want.

The question seems simple enough: if anarchist have themselves often had trouble recognizing anarchic ideas presented in more conventional terms, what is the evidence that non-anarchists will be more attentive to the concepts behind the language?

There are, of course, deeper issues to consider. One of the reasons that we are having this conversation is that we have convinced ourselves that there is a pro-democracy current that goes back to the beginnings of the anarchist tradition. But it seems likely that this perception is itself in part an effect of our failure to really address the concepts behind the words and place the discussions of democracy in their proper contexts. Those of us who want to draw clear lines between anarchy and democracy are not arguing, for the most part, that democracy has been an advance over more despotic forms of government or that anarchists will be able at all times to resolve conflict in ways that reflect "pure anarchy." But when, for example, we look at Proudhon's work, it seems obvious that there are critical differences between what he approves of in principle and those practices that he believes will find a place in the balancing of interests within a free society. We absolutely must, in this context, be able to distinguish between various democratic practices and the principle of democracy. When we turn to Déjacque's later writings, we find him assigning an necessary and inevitable role to a certain kind of democracy, but as the chrysalis from which the anarchist *papillon* will eventually emerge, as a transitional institution and not as an anarchic one. These distinctions seem simple enough that if we were to take democracy itself as seriously as I would hope anarchists take anarchy, they would still probably be expected to emerge in our pursuit of its "pure" or "true" forms.

So why does this debate seem destined to go nowhere? From my admittedly partisan position, I would at least have to ask whether part of the problem is that we have already burdened ourselves with too much ambivalent rhetoric, which we have then treated with an indifference unbecoming among radicals. The search for that democratic current in the tradition is one more aspect of anarchist theory that ought to bring us face to face with the central concerns of the tradition. Let's try not to waste the moment.

ONE FOR THE ROAD?

I'm contemplating a research "tour" in the fall, gathering up some missing pieces for various current projects and surveying the possibilities for some longer-term work. By that time, I will have at least *Anarchy and the Sex Question* to promote—and my publisher would certainly like me to take the opportunity. But as I have been thinking about what I really have to offer in the way of presentations that might themselves be taken out on tour, it strikes me that telling folks about what Emma Goldman is going to tell them in a book we hope they'll buy might not be the most compelling option. On the other hand, some of the lessons about the present, practical uses of anarchist history that I learned along the way might well be interesting fodder for discussion, particularly as I have, over the last year or so, developed some fairly stringent standards for judging when works are finished.

So here is a description of a potential talk that I might give various places along various Amtrak or bus routes, during the second half of this year. If you can think of a likely venue for such an encounter, feel free to get in contact.

Tools that Cut Both Ways:
Thoughts on Anarchist History and Publishing

There is an approach to the study of the anarchist tradition that focuses on the process of documentation, with the guiding assumption being that at least one of the ways that we can put our history to use in the present is simply by confronting it in all its diversity. History is messy and, as a result, a continued engagement with anarchist history is one guard against the solidification of nominally anarchist ideology. With projects like Corvus Editions and the Libertarian Labyrinth archives, I've probably been as ardent a champion of that approach as anyone in recent memory. And I like to think that there have been some real positive, practical results from the years of saying, over and over again, "But wait! There's more! Anarchism's possibilities are far from exhausted!" That said, I've also had a very intimate experience of the strategy's failures and incapacities.

One of the successes of the long campaign was that a few years back I became sufficiently known as someone who knew things about anarchist history that presses started wanting to turn some of that knowledge into "real books"—and not just little, insignificant books. Suddenly, I found myself in a position where I could not help shaping the reception and understanding of some very prominent figures and central texts. I had been pretty cozy being the champion of figures like Sidney Morse, Eliphalet Kimball, Jenny d'Héricourt and "He who was Ganneau." Work on Proudhon has been less cozy, certainly, but increasingly

satisfying in a personal way, while the public impacts follow their own much slower course. All of that fit well in the life I have been eking out.

Then, out of the blue, I was the editor—and pretty much the whole team, if truth be told—of the collected works of Bakunin in English. I was preparing new editions of "God and the State" and Nettlau's "Short History." I had potential outlets for my Proudhon translations. And Déjacque. And Ravachol. I had the opportunity to produce a mass-market introduction to anarchism. And, of course, I had a chance to weigh in on the question of Emma Goldman and feminism.

The transition from working at the margins of both anarchist publishing and anarchist history to work somewhere much closer to the core of both involved a lot of complicated rethinking about the uses of the tradition for practical purposes. I want to talk about some of the new projects, the process of turning them from Corvus-style document collections to "real books," and the standard that I have been developing for judging when a work of anarchist history or theory is really finished and ready to be unleashed upon the world.

I started with a sort of general question: "Is this a tool yet?" It has always seemed necessary, if I was going to bring a manuscript to a publisher, that it have a fairly clear use, adapted to present or foreseeable future problems. But as I wrestled with the revisionist elements in some of the projects, the criterion became a bit more specific: "Does it cut both ways?"

To "cut both ways," in this context, means that not only does the work of history provide some means of dealing with present, "real-world" problem, but it does so in a way that at least has a fighting change of clarifying what it means to confront present problems *as an anarchist*. Sometimes that means confronting problems in the anarchist tradition itself. Sometimes that simply means updating old analyses. And sometimes, finally, it simply means recognizing our entertainments and consolations as such and presenting them accordingly.

This talk—which I hope will fairly rapidly become a conversation—is, first, an opportunity to introduce the new Emma Goldman anthology, *Anarchy and the Sex Question*, and to preview some forthcoming books, but it is also a sort of explanation and position-taking regarding the work that I do as a writer, translator, archivist, publisher, etc. If you've ever wondered just what is driving my various projects, well, I'm right there with you sometimes—but I think perhaps I'm ready to explain.

PROPERTY AND THE PROBLEM OF "MUTUAL EXTRICATION"

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Notes on the Malheur refuge occupation

I don't do a lot of current events commentary here, but there are occasions where it seems both useful and necessary. What follows is notes drawn from my responses to the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, outside Burns, OR. They range from quips to more extended analysis and draw on my family connections to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, including a stint living on refuges much like Malheur in my extreme youth. I have tried not to rely on information that is not available elsewhere online.

I'm posting the material because it has garnered interest on social media, but also because I think that the question of anarchist alternatives to the federal lands is one worth taking up. An extension of my C4SS comments on "mutual extrication" and the "gift economy of property" is already in the works.

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The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and all the problems of Harney County, are fifty miles from the middle of nowhere, but the issues that are really driving the conflict are the sort of things that we can examine much closer to home. Nearly all of us have experienced uncertain climate conditions and many of us have had very recent occasions to think about floodwater management. Given the very slow acceptance of decentralized methods of flood and storm-water management, I expect most of us think of these things as a responsibility of the government, when we think of the responsibility at all. Most of us don't have to go too far to find clear evidence of the massive public works projects that have made agriculture and grazing possible in its present forms, but we also don't have to go far to see clear evidence of the failures and limitations of our resource-management efforts to date. Agencies like BLM and USFWS have seldom sacrificed commercial interests to environmental ones, and when they have opposed immediate commercial interests, it has almost always been in the interest of preserving them in the long term.

As a USFWS brat and former refuge resident, I know more than a bit about all this first-hand. That upbringing no doubt led me along the path to anarchism, but it also gave me a fairly nuanced sense of what government does and does not, can and cannot, do in the real interest of "we, the people." As a native and longtime resident of the American West, I also think I have a pretty clear sense of the fundamentally symbiotic relationship between our much-vaunted individualism and independence and the massive governmental subsidies that have made our very existence possible in its present form.

If this occupation was really just about "the Constitution," then it would be based on an obviously naive and ridiculous misunderstanding of the stakes, not just in eastern Oregon, but all over the world. The attempt to avoid all the hard,

important questions is undoubtedly what has led to conspiracy theories dominating the "defense" of the actions. But the simple explanation actually unravels almost immediately, and we're left with a tangle of right-libertarian and capitalist concerns, elements of the militia movement and the "sagebrush rebellion," real questions about the sustainability of agricultural and resource-management models, bound up with controversies about race, class, indigeneity, etc.

If you bother to engage, don't accept any of the simple narratives. This is arguably either a senseless footnote to actually interesting stories, or it is an episode that requires careful unpacking and analysis.

One of the pieces of the conservative account regarding the Malheur occupation involves the USFWS allegedly flooding adjacent ranches in order to acquire the land. The flooding was actually one of those "100-year events" that we see a lot more frequently these days, which are the result of region-wide factors influencing rainfall, snow melt, infiltration capacity, etc. Again, none of the convenient, simple answers here are likely to be close to the truth.

You have to worry about America, when obviously a large chunk of the population thinks Rufus Ryker is Shane...

One of the quotes from the Malheur occupation that I have seen repeated frequently, without comment, is this, from Ryan Bundy: "The best possible outcome is that the ranchers that have been kicked out of the area, then they will come back and reclaim their land, and the wildlife refuge will be shut down forever and the federal government will relinquish such control..."

First, there don't seem to have been any ranchers "kicked out of the area." There were ranchers who suffered from the 100-year flood events in the 80s, and there are undoubtedly ranchers who have suffered or are suffering from the extreme drought in the area. There are some ranchers who have been informed that they could no longer graze cattle on the refuge itself, for which they have never paid grazing fees. The refuge is not grazing land, subject to the open range policies, and grazing is not compatible with the agency mandate, but virtually all federal land-management agencies have been extraordinarily permissive when it comes to the treatment of adjacent farms and ranches, so, contrary to the narrative of "oppression," those private interests have been the recipients of free benefits at least potentially at odds with the mission of serving the general public. Land-management agencies necessarily have to pay greater attention to the macro-level concerns than most of us, but it is still, after all, easier to be nice to the neighbors than to fight them sometimes, particularly when the neighbors are armed and have no public mandate to consider. When it has been deemed necessary to end grazing on refuges in the PNW region, every effort has been made to do so as amicably as possible, with years of warning. There have apparently been a very few cases where orders to immediately enforce refuge

mandates have come down from on high, but not from USFWS personnel at the refuge or regional level.

I've posted the executive order establishing the original "Lake Malheur Reservation" on my wall. In it, you can see the provision for "valid existing rights."

The other point is that it is now explicit that the occupiers desire that "the wildlife refuge will be shut down forever." And that's probably the question we should all be focusing on, since any object lessons you desired regarding white privilege or the inconsistencies of constitutionalism and armed insurrection have almost certainly been established already.

In what possible way could closing down the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and presumably eventually the whole USFWS agency, be considered a good thing?

To answer that question you would need to understand a lot of issues, from the actual mandates and practices or various agencies to complex ecological and economic matters. Most of us don't even have a good beginning at all that. I'm betting that the occupying force at Malheur doesn't know much more than the average person, and is probably even less concerned than most with many of the big-picture concerns. But the occupiers have presented us with a fairly simple, stark choice: Who do you want to see manage the Malheur refuge, the refuge personnel or the armed occupiers? From my perspective, the choice is pretty simple. Think what you like about the various government land-management agencies, or government in general, but recognize that the "multiple use" mandates governing the management of virtually all federal lands demand not just big-picture thinking and willingness to compromise, but the skills to put workable compromises into action. The history of federal land-use management is not a particular glorious one, but arguably the greatest blemishes on it have come when the public trust has been sacrificed to private interest. The notion that surrendering the federal lands to private interest will result in a better management of the resources on which we all ultimately depend seems like the most foolish of fantasies.

And for those of my anarchist and libertarian friends who might consider even this tepid defense of government agencies shocking, the lesson should be clear: Federal land management at the very least sets a bar that any anti-governmental alternative will have to exceed. And it will have to do so without the opportunities afforded by prior control, eminent domain, federal taxation, etc. "Post-scarcity," should it come about, still isn't going to wipe away downstream effects or make fragile ecosystems any more resilient in the face of industrial land-use. We can barely have a conversation about property without falling back on useless dogma or "we'll worry about that later" escapism. In that, we're very, very mainstream.

The bottom line is that all of us have to do better. Maybe the worst thing about the Malheur situation is that, if the occupiers have a laughable approach

to all these complex issues of law and land use (and they almost certainly do), we aren't much better off in that regard.

I'm very glad that Malheur refuge personnel have all been out of harm's way during the armed occupation, but I suspect that their absence from the story has made it easier to treat the occupation as victimless and to take claims about the peacefulness of the Hammonds and Bundys at face value.

For myself, Malheur is enough like places I lived as a child for this all to feel a bit like a home invasion.

I was channeling my 80s-90s academic self, the American Culture Studies scholar, and applying a little myth-symbol type analysis to the Malheur narratives today. One of the things that strikes me is that we're seeing a scenario familiar from about a gazillion westerns, in the context of which the occupiers at Malheur seem to fit remarkably simply into the role of "black hats."

Is there a segment of America that has always rooted for the cattle barons against the settlers, and hopes Shane never comes back? I wonder who the militia members identify with in "Hang Em High."

Unless the debate somehow turns to the details of land management, the back-and-forth about the events at Malheur can hardly be anything but a discussion about how we would prefer to define particular hot-button terms and what myths we prefer to those complex realities.

Are the armed occupiers "terrorists"? It's glaringly obvious that there is no objective answer for that, and we are left discussing whether or not we would prefer to refer to them as such. This is where the comparisons to other events are useful, but certainly not definitive. We suspect that the events at Malheur may well fall "within the envelope," given the wide extension of government definitions and public perception, but that extension probably shouldn't make us sleep better at night. And if that suspicion riles you up, as perhaps it should, it's probably not BLM that should be the target of your anger.

Are the armed occupiers "peaceful"? Well, they haven't shot anyone yet, but they haven't ruled it out. Some pro-gun activists seem to think that everyone should be comfortable with an overtly armed society, but no activist, however just or reasonable their position may be, has any right to demand that others not feel threatened by their activism. And while we are making strategic use of comparisons, it seems worth asking how we should compare the "peaceful" actions of armed occupiers who attempt to influence policy be exploiting other people's desire to avoid violence (and this is clearly at least part of what is happening) with those of unarmed protesters willing to confront armed authority. I would expect, even hope, that many of the libertarians who have spoken of the "peacefulness" of the Malheur occupation would balk at praising the "peacefulness" of military occupations or police forces that "keep the peace" through the threat of force. And the Hammonds? Well, they didn't actually rip

anyone's head off and shit down their throat. That's something, I guess, but, while we're talking about preferences, I'm not sure it's worth calling their actions "peaceful."

So what about defending people's occupational "way of life"? Had I followed in my father's footsteps, the occupiers would be threatening mine. There are families on some national wildlife refuges, like mine was in my extreme youth. The workers on some refuges do essentially the same tasks as their neighbors, except that they do it in order to balance the needs of those neighbors, those of migratory wildlife and those of all the rest of us who, whether we like it or acknowledge it or not, benefit from land, game and resource management. As it turns out, of course, I didn't follow in my father's footsteps, largely because it had become increasingly hard to do the job. Instead, I went on to careers in academics and bookselling, where, let's face it, the preservation of my occupational way of life has not been of very great concern to anyone not in the same rotten situation. I do notice that lots of people have some investment in the mythology of the book trade, but I'm afraid most of what I see has about as much connection to my real struggles as "Shane" or "The Big Valley" has to the realities of western land management.

Has the government systematically "harassed" the Hammonds or driven other ranchers away? Grazing rights have not remained static, and certainly the enforcement of laws and agency mandates has not remained static. Neither has anything else, beyond some myths. The almost complete silence about extreme droughts and 100-year floods has enabled people to imagine that the only thing standing in anyone's way in Harney County is the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service. You don't have to believe in anthropogenic global warming or put any particular significance on the patterns of extreme weather in order to understand that extreme weather is real and a factor in all sorts of aspects of our lives. Just step outside, or think about stepping outside over the last few months, and most of us will be able to imagine obstacles as formidable as government regulations. We have to start actually getting specific to trace all the reasons why range management might be important, and not just to ranchers, but we can certainly at least pretty quickly get to the point where the simple "government destroying rural America" narrative begins to show its weaknesses.

[There's more to say. We'll see if I find the time and energy to say it.]

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TO "PROPERTY" VIA "MUTUAL EXTRICATION"

I've been taking part in a C4SS-sponsored discussion of occupancy-and-use property norms, "Occupancy and Use: Potential Applications and Possible Shortcomings," which is now appearing on the Center's website. The exchange opened with a piece by Kevin Carson, "Are We All Mutualists?," which suggests that perhaps the answer is "yes." A series of responses will be posted every other day, with my "Neo-Proudhonian Remarks" already posted under the title "Limiting Conditions and Local Desires."

For me, this first response was an opportunity to talk again about the development of Proudhon's thoughts on property, but also to return to the question of how we might construct property norms that would not be, in Proudhon's sense, "theft." So you will find some new thoughts on the "gift economy of property" at the end of the piece, and some clarifications in my later contributions to the exchange. Part of what is new is an approach to establishing property through a sort of "mutual extrication," a necessity perhaps for individuals "not contained between [their] hat and boots."

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There is a great deal that could be said in response to Kevin Carson's opening statement, from the "neo-Proudhonian" mutualist perspective, but I'll try to keep things at least relatively short. Like Kevin, my introduction to the notion of occupancy-and-use land tenure was through the works of Benjamin R. Tucker and the *Liberty* circle and, like him, I think that Proudhon's famous phrase regarding property has been used in unfortunate ways by many anarchists to avoid the question of property. Beyond that, however, our positions seem to diverge, beginning with the very basic question of the indispensability of property rules. As a result, my response will tackle two different tasks: to briefly defend the viability of the Tucker- and Ingalls-inspired occupancy-and-use system, and then to suggest that Proudhon's work, whether it is a question of the early theory of "possession" or the later "New Theory" of property, indicates different approaches to the question of land tenure.

It is hard to talk about the viability of land tenure systems in a vacuum, particularly in a modern context where "land," even in the broadest sense of natural resources, is arguably less dominant among the factors of production than it has been in other eras. If we were to survey the various reforms championed by Tucker over his career, we might pick something like Josiah Warren's *cost principle* as one more amenable to consideration alone, while *occupancy-and-use, mutual banking* and some others are both more interdependent and more dependent on particular conditions for their efficacy. It is also hard to judge the various proposals without situating them either as transitional reforms or systems for "after the revolution" (however we might conceptualize revolutionary change.) All of this means that the most ardent, but serious advocate of occupancy-and-use ought to be able to imagine scenarios in

which it was not a solution to the most pressing problems, where it was not particularly compatible with other solutions, or where the demand for other institutions would specifically shape the way that it was implemented. For example, as a transitional mechanism, some combination of occupancy-and-use and mutual banking on the William B. Greene model might produce a particularly robust system, within which the members of a particular mutual credit organization would have a strong interest in protecting the occupation rights on other members and trading partners. And we would expect this particular combination of institutions to produce something much more like stable conventional ownership, complete with property registries and whatever property insurance was necessary to protect the mutual associations against unforeseen accidents. On the other hand, where the cost principle held sway — or even the more general notion that individuals should carry their own costs — we might at least find fewer incentives to shape the community through land-tenure rules. This dependency on local factors will, of course, also apply to all of the potential alternatives. It's not hard to imagine communities within which competition for particular locations would have a strong influence on the potential success or failure of large portions of the population, and some form of land-value taxation would be a logical reform, as well as others where the specific distribution of locations and occupations would make land rent a negligible factor.

What we can probably say safely, however, is that where Tucker-style occupancy-and-use is an appropriate solution, in harmony both with local needs and with other institutions, the usual objections seem like quibbles. As Kevin has repeatedly emphasized, all land tenure schemes will be what Proudhon called "approximations," attempted solutions to particular problems, which will undoubtedly combine success and failure among their effects. What that means is that hopefully the form of the solutions will be driven by the real nature of the problems — the very thing that critics of occupancy-and-use always seem to imagine won't be done. So, for example, a solution to the problem of "absentee ownership" should be driven by the problem that the phrase designates, not, as is so often the case in our debates, by what we imagine the phrase itself must commit us to. "Occupancy-and-use" is shorthand, not a magic formula, so if too great fidelity to some interpretation of the phrase seems to deprive us of practices that seem harmless or beneficial, we should naturally reexamine what principle we are following or what concrete consequences we are pursuing. To respond to one common quibble, there's nothing about solving the problem of homelessness that naturally commits us to abolishing hotels, or even equitable rental agreements. New property conventions ought to appear as an opportunity to explore new social relations and new living arrangements. If our general principle is that individuals ought to have some ownership in the real property where they are most individually invested, there is no reason that we should assume that will be a domicile, rather than a workplace or a recreational site. There is also no reason to assume that, given other opportunities, individuals

will invest in the ways that a regime of "private property" has encouraged. A more mobile culture could be a less secure one, or it could simply involve additional freedoms.

I am, in the end, considerably less certain than Kevin that the various principled positions on property are likely to converge — at least as a result of their principles. Even if I was willing to grant the indispensability of "property rules" of some sort, it seems to me that the notion of "property" does not amount to a shared concept among the various currents. Among "Lockeans," for example, the question of the provisos separates what seem to me almost diametrically opposed notions of the nature of "property," and there are similar differences among the various types of Georgism and geoism. Many, perhaps most communists, do indeed seem to have a theory of property, but the distinction so frequently made between "personal" and "private property" is not, as is so often claimed, the same as Proudhon's distinction between "simple property" and "simple possession." I think that, in practice, it is likely that anarchists and other sorts of less thoroughgoing anti-authoritarians might well come to terms, but I expect that the cause would be material interests and a commitment to libertarian values of one sort or another, as opposed to commitment to principles of property. And that might be good enough in some instances, or it might be as much as we could hope for. It is, after all, the play of interests that various early anarchists appealed to most directly as the mechanism of a free society.

As an aside, I think those who are interested in establishing occupancy-and-use property on something like a natural rights basis are likely to find useful and provocative developments in the works of Joshua King Ingalls. Tucker's use of the work of his influences was always partial and not always particularly faithful, so returning to the sources is often the source of pleasant surprises. Ingalls, for instance, responded to the idea that capitalists should be reimbursed for damage done to the land by suggesting, in a proto-ecological manner, that perhaps it was the land itself that should logically be reimbursed, rather than its owner. In turn, Ingalls's work might be usefully read or reread alongside Thomas Skidmore's *The Rights of Man to Property*. I suspect few modern readers will have much use for his agrarian communist solution to the problem of property, but the analysis that led him there remains interesting, and anticipates Proudhon in some ways.

But it is necessary, finally, to return to Proudhon. It seems clear, as Kevin has suggested, that a cursory treatment of Proudhon's declarations about property has allowed some anarchists to sidestep the question of property. It would be unfortunate, however, if, having invoked Proudhon, a somewhat cursory treatment of the "indispensability" of "property rules" ended up sidestepping the substance of his critique.

There are, of course, conceptions of property which allow very little *outside*, but they are not, I think, legal conceptions (or conceptions based on rules), nor are they dependent on property being individual and exclusive. If property is,

for example, simply what is *proper* to a given individual, then some talk of property is inescapable. But property almost always means more to us. Proudhon's argument was that property involved an "accounting error," through which a major contribution to production, that of the "collective force" generate by associated laborers, was simply left out of the capitalist account of production. Its share of the wealth generated was then individually appropriated by capitalists. Labor then found its the fruits of its own exertions working against it in the marketplace in virtually all subsequent transactions. Proudhon left open the possibility of a property that would not be "theft" or "impossible," but in the end he left us without any very clear account of it. Neither "possession" nor the property discussed in *The Theory of Property* quite seem to fill the bill. Meanwhile, to say that we reject property as Proudhon understood it really remains a mouthful, given the multiple and wide-ranging critiques in his work.

Let us, as a thought experiment, ignore some of the rhetorical complexity of Proudhon's critical work and assume for the moment that the critique of "property" was really just a critique of the *droit d'aubaine.* To say that that we embrace property as indispensable, but also reject what Proudhon rejected, we would have to subject every proposed property theory to the multiple critiques he raised. Proudhon argues, for example, against all the usual means of understanding homesteading. Will any of those mechanisms seems less objectionable if no *droit d'aubaine* is assumed to attach? Can any of them pertain if we acknowledge that the collective force must received its due? The problem seems fairly complex.

But isn't the answer found in the notion of "possession"? If we take Proudhon's word for it, then possession is explicitly not a matter of rights or law. Instead, it is simply a matter of fact. Where Ingalls suggested reducing the legal order so that possession, with the recognition of natural rights, was the entirety of the law, Proudhon seems intent on going farther. That shouldn't startle us, since his writing on "moral sanction" suggest that society could have no power to enforce any of the pacts that might govern a more formal sort of occupancy-and-use system. In "Justice," he declares that any anarchistic social system that exceeded "an equation and a power of collectivity" (recognition of equality-of-standing among individuals and attention to the manifestations of collective force) would immediately run aground on its own contradictions. Reading *What is Property?* in this light, some familiar passages may seem strangely naive, but I think there is a lot of evidence that Proudhon really did imagine a world in which the only laws were those of nature and where "rights," as he explained in *War and Peace*, referred to nothing more than the future needs of developing individuals. This anarchistic vision of Proudhon's is so stark that we often seem simply not to recognize it as such, but it seems to be the foundation for virtually all of his thought. We can talk about a "system of justice" in Proudhon's work, but only if we limit ourselves to that previously

mentioned social system. Justice for Proudhon was simply balance, unmediated by any hierarchy or authority.

If we need more indications that perhaps property rules weren't indispensable for Proudhon, we might recall that his first published remarks on property appeared in *The Celebration of Sunday*, in 1839, a year before *What is Property?* And what we find there is a first exploration of the connections between property and theft that flips the ordinary understanding of the terms. Instead of defining theft as the violation of property, we find an exercise in biblical interpretation, an account of property being established by a "putting aside," which Proudhon links etymologically to theft. The account is, of course, merely suggestive, but what it suggests is a view of the world in which individual property is not a given. When, in the following year, Proudhon appears to reject both exclusive individual property and communism, it is one more indication that we should perhaps take the time to look for alternatives.

That, of course, leaves the third of Proudhon's famous statements on property, "property is liberty," to address. From almost the beginning, Proudhon acknowledged that property was treated as indispensable because liberty was widely accepted as primary among its *aims*. His examination of the positive aims and possible positive effects of property was parallel to, and ultimately inseparable from, his criticism of its absolutist justifications and potentially despotic effects. When he finally truly abandoned the theory of possession for that of property in 1861 (in the work published posthumously as *The Theory of Property*, which was originally part of a much longer study of Poland), it was not because he believed that property was not theft, but because he believed that there were benefits to equalizing and universalizing that sort of theft (a proposition he had entertained as early as 1842.) In order to really understand the "New Theory" we should probably examine it in the context of *War and Peace*, which was written at roughly the same time as the bulk of *The Theory of Property*. Proudhon's economic manuscripts, written in the early 1850s, reveal to us that while Proudhon was finding evidence of collective force in all sorts of spheres, he did not consider the market an example of the sort of association that generated it. If a workshop or a commune could manifest itself as what he called a unity-collectivity, market interactions were, in his mind, more like war. The "New Theory" is thus more like a model of "armed peace" than it is of, say, emergent order.

Unfortunately, between the invocations of Proudhon to avoid property and the invocations of property that neglect Proudhon, a really *proudhonian* theory of occupancy-and-use remains a bit elusive. While there is, no doubt, a principled approach at work in both of Proudhon's treatment of the property question, the principle is ultimately *anarchy*, and we are left largely on our own to determine just how to conceptualize property. I am inclined to think that Proudhon's critiques of existing property theories still stand up pretty well, and that the traditional approaches most likely to skirt the problem of exploitation and the *aubaines*, such as proviso-Lockean theory, are not of a lot of practical use under

present conditions. I don't see any very promising contenders for a theory of just appropriation, which leaves me in roughly the same position I was eight years ago, when I proposed the possibility of a "gift economy of property." As a conclusion, let me just return briefly and expand on that notion.

There are places where Proudhon described property as a "free gift" of society. Strictly speaking, of course, Proudhon would have to have acknowledged that it was a gift that society had no right to give. According to his critique, even society cannot be a proprietor. (This is probably the simplest objection to LVT schemes.) In a truly anarchic space, outside the legal order and beyond the realm of permissions and prohibitions, there seems to be no principle that can legitimate individual appropriation directly. And in a world filled with *unity-collectivities*, what is proper to each of us is mixed up with the potential property of everyone else. Conflict seems inevitable. We are told that the present system cannot even sustain a living wage for all workers, so just imagine if everyone simply demanded their own subjective valuation of their labor, let alone their share of the fruits of collective force. Simple anarchy could very well be a matter of everyone being up in everyone else's business, with no *authorization* either to intrude or to withdraw. I suspect most of us would prefer some other arrangement.

If we are to find a social order that more closely resembles emergent harmony them armed peace or open war, what are we to do? If we cannot take, then perhaps we can give. We know the value and the virtues of individual property, as did Proudhon. If we are unable to secure it for ourselves as a matter of individual appropriation, then perhaps we can grant it to one another as a matter of gift or cession, not of a property that we individually own, but of claims that we might otherwise make on one another? Imagine the basis of this new property not as *appropriation* but as mutual *extrication*. Some of the steps would resemble familiar propertarian notions. First, perhaps, mutual release would yield a variety of "self-ownership." Then, the familiar "personal property" in items of more intimate attachment or use. Beyond that, real property on the basis of occupancy-and-use. Then, perhaps, a sphere of alienable goods and a recognition of exchange — based, like the other steps on a mutual willingness not to interfere with one another's activities. Etc. Etc. Limiting conditions and local desires would determine the limits of the emerging system.

Perhaps this approach will seem either naïve or backward, but it has the virtue of being an approach to some form of exclusive, individual property that I suspect can pass muster according to the Proudhonian standards so often invoked — even in the demanding form I have attributed to them. What I am describing seem to me to be steps on the road from market exchange as a form of warfare to the possibility of reinventing markets in a form much more closely resembling Proudhon's unity-collectivities, with their dividends of collective force. But I suspect we are already well into a somewhat different conversation.

PROPERTY, INDIVIDUALITY AND COLLECTIVE FORCE

The events at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge have occupied my thoughts since the armed occupation began, not least because I have close family connections to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the region—connections so close that I spent the first few years of my life on refuges very similar to the one at Malheur and have had a "front-row seat," so to speak, throughout my life, where some of the thorniest debates about the federal lands are concerned. I've posted some of that material to the blog, and will probably post more. But the situation on the refuge has also driven some new thoughts on the question of anarchist property norms, which seem of more direct interest to those who have followed the development of my thoughts here..

For those who haven't followed my windings through Proudhon's property theory or my development of an alternative "gift economy of property," the most immediately relevant writings are the "Practicing the Encounter" section at the end of Contr'un 3 and "Limiting Conditions and Local Desires," my initial contribution to the C4SS exchange on occupancy-and-use property norms. In the first essay (which, I am afraid, betrays its exploratory nature in some of the prose), I raised questions about what entities could be considered legitimate "subjects of appropriation," with interests that should be considered as we attempt to formulate a theory of just appropriation. And I raised the possibility that we might have to account for a lot more than just individual human agents, even if the working-out process was necessarily on our human, all too human shoulders. I think that, ultimately, that is correct, but I also think that we can focus a bit more directly on the human actors without a great deal of risk, provided we acknowledge that minimizing damage to the environment and to other species is in the interest of individual human beings. Some notion of *stewardship* is ultimately necessary for the representation of non-human interests, just a *solidarity* is necessary for the representation of social collectivities. Those two caveats make it easier to pick up the thread in the second piece, which proposes "mutual extrication" as a model for human individuals attempting to "gift" one another property rights.

The discussion of a "gift economy of property" has taken its initial cues from the second of Proudhon's three declarations on property: *property is impossible.* The question I have been exploring for some time now is whether *any* regime of individual *property rights* was justifiable, under present conditions and in the face of anarchist critiques of property.

To review a bit: I think that Locke's basic model, which begins with the "fact" of property in one's person (in the sense that it encourages us to base any system of property rights in what is, in the most strictly descriptive sense, "proper" to the individual), notes the ever-changing boundaries of the "person" (presenting human activity as "labor-mixing") and then tries to imagine the conditions under which that most basic sort of appropriation ought to be a matter of moral or legal indifference to others (with the *provisos*, and the

standard of the "good draught" of consumption that leaves a "whole river" of resources, rendering this sort of appropriation unobjectionable because it is essentially non-rivalrous.) This is not a blanket endorsement of Locke, who, it seems to me, has to leave the most elegant parts of his argument behind in order to make sense of actual property conventions and make "homesteading" productive of alienable property appropriate to market relations. It is the weak, but almost certainly useful, observation that exclusive individual appropriation is no big deal if it is literally the case that nobody is worse off because of it, which is decidedly *not* the approach we see from modern propertarians. When we return to the problems posed by Proudhon's critique and ask whether there is some system of property rights that is not essentially its own contradiction and violation—"theft"—we at least have some standard drawn from traditional property theory to use as a point of comparison.

It seems obvious that, at the level of individual appropriation, unamplified by high levels of technology, the possibility of an appropriation that would not (in some genteral, *a priori* sense) be *theft* is largely dependent on the renewability of resources. That observation is important, because it suggests that the question of just appropriation is not just a legal or moral question. It is in some sense, and perhaps in a really fundamental sense, also an ecological question. If our rights have some pretense to *universal* or *natural* status, then they are going fluctuate as nature fluctuate said. There are probably things in our societies that everyone could appropriate without threatening the continued supply, and perhaps even non-renewable resources of this sort (assuming we define "resource" broadly), but some of the traditional components of "the commons" (clean air and water, for example) may no longer be among them. We've amplified our individual impacts through technological advances and large-scale social organization. If there was ever a reason to doubt the reality of *collective force* as a factor in our societies, it's hard to miss seeing it almost everywhere now. As a result, we may have lost our connection to that simple, elegant homesteading model, not because anything has change about the legal principles or ethical imperatives connected to exclusive, individual property rights, but simply because we are not ourselves exclusive and individual in the same ways as our ancestors. We were probably never, as Whitman put it, "contained between hat and boots," but the mixing and sprawling of persons is arguably both real and ongoing.

Let's linger for a moment and consider the implications of this twist on the notion that *property is impossible*. For Proudhon, the "impossibility" of property arose primarily from the *droit d'aubaine* ("right of increase") attached to capitalist property rights. That did not necessarily preclude some kind of return to strong, exclusive, individual property rights, provided those rights could be constrained either by principles like those found in Locke's provisos or in a strong egalitarian ethic, such as we find in the "personal property" speculations of even communistic anarchists. After all, between the early works advocating

"possession" and the "New Theory" of the 1860s, Proudhon explored both possibilities to at least some degree. But if it is indeed the case that our "individual" interventions and appropriations are no longer in balance with the regenerative capacities of our natural environment, then there are arguably some very interesting, and certainly troubling consequences. First, it raises the possibility that exclusive, individual property rights—even in a radically reimagined form like my "gift economy of property"—may be impossible. But it also raises the possibility that it is not just property *rights* that are threatened by our current social and technological organization. It may be that property, even in the descriptive sense, is no longer sufficiently *individual* to support the kind of discussion regarding property that we are accustomed to. That notion may be a bit difficult to come to terms with, but let's at least attempt to give it a try, particularly as a situation in which we could meaningfully say that *individuality is impossible* would create problems for our presumably non-propertarian options nearly as great as those confronting any new theory of property rights.

What I'm suggesting about the *limits* of "mutual extrication" might seem like a radicalization or even repudiation of some of what I've said in the past, but I think it makes most sense to take it simply as a clarification—and one that allows us to return to some other familiar themes. Whitman was not the only radical voice we have noted for whom the "contained between hat and boots" model of individuality was not adequate. Pierre Leroux, William Batchelder Greene, Proudhon, Stirner and Bakunin, among others, argued in various ways for the recognition of other people as an essential part of what is proper to the growth and continued being of human individuals. And our various explorations of the work of *collective force* have suggested that what is proper to individuals *as individuals* does not exhaust their *property* (in the general, descriptive sense), since it is still necessary to account for what is proper to individuals *as parts of various social collectivities*.

We certainly shouldn't be surprised that what is proper to human beings involves *involvement, entangling* and *combination*. After all, the reigning metaphor for appropriation is *mixing*. But if we are surprised that all that mixing involves more than just consumption by relatively isolated and autonomous human beings, then we should probably explore our surprise carefully.

There isn't space here to go back through all the various approaches I've made over the years to this particular understanding of *the problem of property*. Instead, let's just take a look at the proposal I made in the recent C4SS exchange:

If [in our search for a theory of just appropriation] we cannot take, then perhaps we can give. We know the value and the virtues of individual property, as did Proudhon. If we are unable to secure it for ourselves as a matter of individual appropriation, then perhaps we can grant it to one another as a

matter of gift or cession, not of a property that we individually own, but of claims that we might otherwise make on one another? Imagine the basis of this new property not as *appropriation* but as mutual *extrication*. Some of the steps would resemble familiar propertarian notions. First, perhaps, mutual release would yield a variety of "self-ownership." Then, the familiar "personal property" in items of more intimate attachment or use. Beyond that, real property on the basis of occupancy-and-use. Then, perhaps, a sphere of alienable goods and a recognition of exchange — based, like the other steps on a mutual willingness not to interfere with one another's activities. Etc. Etc. Limiting conditions and local desires would determine the limits of the emerging system.

This was a fairly modest proposal, focused on one very limited, if essential aspect of the property-problem. To relinquish claims on one another of a more or less intimate sort, those relating to our bodies and to items "personal property," begins to reopen a space for meaningful individuality. The recognition of one relative autonomy and responsibility in one another, the basic recognition of individuality itself, is the easiest gift to give one another. The allowance of some space within which to learn and potentially, despite the potentially intimate nature of the consequences, is harder and the gift of anarchy, the decision to refuse to mediate our relationships through any of the fundamentally archic structures that surround us is harder still, involving us in struggles and forms of vigilance without clear endpoints.

To get even this far in our mutual extrication would demand some fairly substantial changes in attitude and practice. Among other things, the emphasis on *identities*, including the anarchist identity, would have to be substantially reduced. A Stirneresque refusal to treat individuals as instances of some type or symptoms of some system, combined with a Proudhonian recognition of real collectivities, would almost certainly serve to replace most of what might be lost in the way of critical and analytic tools, but it is probably the case that current anarchist practice is much less dependent on conceptual tools than it is on evolving custom and (explicit or implicit) platforms. An anarchism with considerably less "inside" to it would mean a revolution in relations between anarchists, necessitating a greater tolerance of differences, but also forcing our relations of solidarity onto a more specific sort of footing. And, ultimately, I suspect that even the simplest, most abstract sort of transformation in this direction would probably be resisted by many people who consider themselves anarchists at present.

Giving each other space to learn and to err, without the constant mutual policing so common in anarchist circles, would be a big step, even if we are only talking about attitudes and opinions. We are almost all pretty deeply invested in a sort of social symptomology, on the basis of which we tend to judge each other's every action. But that step pales beside the extension of the same freedom in activities involving the consumption of real, scarce resources. I think it is fair to say that we are not, for the most part, certain that we can even sustain significant differences of opinion, so wary are we of the power of

existing hegemonic systems to recuperate and incorporate even presumably dissenting thought. As a result, we have put ourselves in a strange position, where one of the natural responses to divergence from the norms of the milieu is to *amplify* the divergent opinions, through "calling out," public shaming, the transformation of local conflicts into national or international *causes célèbres*, etc.

When we think about this process of amplification, we should recognize the effects of *collective force*. Whether the anarchist milieu is the association that we wish it was or believe that it can be, it is still an association and, as such, produces a sort of surplus, similar in many respects to those generated within the economic and governmental spheres—and perhaps subject to the same sorts of accumulation and deployment by minorities. And the institutions and social practices that provide a context for anarchist practice also filter and amplify in various ways.

Let's focus again, and clarify what is at stake here, so we can move on to questions directly relating to property. In the "general theory of *archy*" post, I was concerned with generalizing the theory of *exploitation*, which Proudhon applied to capitalist property and the governmentalist State. In those instances, it is a matter of the collective force of an association being monopolized, either by a minority within the association or by outsiders. My suggestion was that some form of exploitation was present at the heart of most, if not all, social hierarchies. To say that a similar sort of exploitation might take place within the context of organized anarchism is not, I think, particularly outlandish, although the "force" appropriated would be of a more abstract character than we generally consider in these discussions.

But when we are talking about the "impossibility of individuality" as an effect of collective force, the problem takes on a rather different character and we are poised to open a new and potentially very large can of worms. Perhaps only primitivism and some anti-civilization thought has come close to addressing this side of the collective force question. I'm not sure that approach has been particularly fruitful, but we should probably at least consider what these currents might add to our analysis.

If we turn our attention to collective force that is not monopolized within associations, that would still exist (and might be even greater) within entirely egalitarian societies as a kind of "commons," we probably have to acknowledge that there are differences between an egalitarian society in which everyone is equipped with just their bare hands and one in which everyone has access to earth-moving equipment (and we can easily imagine similar differences if it is a question of access to arms, or to any number of other resources.) When we act like every micro-aggression is something like a nuclear strike, and have such trouble finding space in our associations for individual expression, perhaps we're not actually overreacting. Perhaps, instead, we're in the position of property theorists who want to talk about "homesteading" as if it was a question

of lone individuals with hand tools, rather than members of highly mechanized societies.

This has gone longer than I intended, so let me wrap this introductory post, perhaps a bit abruptly, with some questions. As a first step into what is almost certainly going to be a very complicated discussion of "property," perhaps we need to ask to what extent we really *know our own strength*, either quantitatively or qualitatively. To what extent do the conversations we have about individuality, property, responsibility, solidarity, community, etc. actually take any account of the effects of collective force?

[to be continued...]