

increasing steadily since the early 2000s. Examinations of anarchism are conducted across an astonishingly broad range of academic disciplines, principally within the social sciences.⁷⁶ These include history, political theory, and anthropology,⁷⁷ but also geography, education, gender studies, and sociology. Anarchism is thus gaining ever more prominence as a multidisciplinary subject in academia. Indeed, the scope and depth of research on anarchism has never been as wide as it is today. Anarchist studies have undoubtedly become a vibrant field of inquiry. In the past 10 years debates about anarchism surfaced within the domain of philosophy, which had hitherto ignored or scorned the tradition.⁷⁸ This is in large part thanks to the writings of postanarchist thinkers and of their critics, which the following section proceeds to discuss.⁷⁹

Individualist Anarchism in France and its Legacy

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chism, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017; T. Ibañez *Nouveaux fragments épars pour un anarchisme sans dogmes*, Paris : Editions des Cascades, 2017. F. Dupuis-Déri, *Les nouveaux anarchistes*, Paris, édition Textuel, 2018. B. Franks, N. Jun, and L. Williams (eds.), *Anarchism. A Conceptual Approach*, London, Routledge, 2018; D. Hamelin and J. Lamy, L'anarchisme, cet autre socialisme, *Actuel Marx*, vol. 2, n. 66, 2019.

⁷⁶ *Anarchisme et sciences sociales*, Lille, mars 2018.

⁷⁷ Anthropologie et anarchisme, *Journal des anthropologues*, 1er semestre 2018.

⁷⁸ B. Franks & M. Wilson (eds.), *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; J-C. Angaut, D Colson & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *Philosophie de l'anarchie*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 2012; J. J. Nathan (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy*, Leiden, Brill, 2017.

⁷⁹ T. Ibañez, *Fragments épars pour un anarchisme sans dogmes*, Paris, Éditions des Cascades, 2010; D. Rouselle & S. E. Türkeli (eds.) *Post-Anarchism: A Reader*, London, Pluto Press, 2011; V. García, *L'anarchisme aujourd'hui*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007; T. Ibañez, *Anarchisme en mouvement. Anarchisme, néo-anarchisme et post-anarchisme*, Paris, Nada, 2014.

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archism, particularly worthy of mention is the comprehensive biographical dictionary of the francophone libertarian movement, which was compiled from 2006 to 2014.⁷² A research seminar called *Explorations théoriques anarchistes pragmatistes pour l'émancipation (ETAPE)* was launched in 2013.⁷³ This seminar is linked to *Grand Angle libertaire*, an online platform for libertarian thought.⁷⁴ Several academics worldwide now specialize in anarchist studies, and the past twenty years have witnessed an unprecedented burgeoning of publications on anarchism.⁷⁵ The number of PhD theses on the topic has been

Tours, novembre 2015; *Le défi libertaire*, Limoges, novembre 2016; *Anarchisme et sciences sociales*, Lille, mars 2018; *Se réappropriier le territoire, lutter contre les dominations*, Rabastens, juin 2019.

⁷² C. Pennetier et al (eds.), *Les Anarchistes: dictionnaire biographique du mouvement libertaire francophone*, Lyon, Éditions de l'Atelier, 2014. It includes 500 biographies in addition to 3,200 other biographies online.

⁷³ P. Corcuff, *Explorations. Pour une théorie sociale libertaire*, Lyon, Al-bache et l'Atelier de création libertaire, 2019.

⁷⁴ [<http://www.grand-angle-libertaire.net/>]

⁷⁵ Here is a list of some of the major English and French publications on contemporary anarchism in the past couple of decades: *Twenty-First Century Anarchism*, eds. J. Purkis & J. Bowen, London, Cassell, 1997; M. Puciarelli, *L'imaginaire des libertaires aujourd'hui*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1999; D. Graeber, *The New Anarchists*, *New Left Review*, n. 13, 2002, pp.61–73; R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead. Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, London, Pluto Press, 2005; U. Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*, London, Pluto Press, 2007; V. García, *L'anarchisme aujourd'hui*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007; S. Luck, *Sociologie de l'engagement libertaire dans la France contemporaine*, PhD Thesis, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris I, 2008; C. Granier, *Les Briseurs de formules*, Coeuvres, Ressouvenances, 2008 ; *Contemporary Anarchist Studies*, eds. R. Amster et al., New York, Routledge, 2009; M. Bamyeh, *Anarchy as Order*, The History and Future of Civic Humanity J.J. Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2009; N. & S. Wahl, *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2010; Z. Vodovnik, *A Living Spirit of Revolt, The Infrapolitics of Anarchism*, Michigan, PM Press, 2013; T. Ibáñez, *Anarchisme en mouvement, Anarchisme, néoanarchisme et postanarchisme*, Paris, nada éditions, 2014; P. Corcuff, *Enjeux libertaires pour le XXIème siècle par un anarchiste neophyte*, Paris, Éditions du Monde Libertaire, 2015; D. M. Williams, *Black Flags and Social Movements, A Sociological Analysis of Movement Anar-*

ism, Marxism, or Frankfurt school critical theory, anarchism has hitherto had a minor, not to say negligible, presence in academia. Its radical ideology was found theoretically lacking or incoherent, if not altogether inane.⁶⁸ Anarchism was treated as an otiose political eccentricity and, as such, was a source of mockery and antipathy. Although it is still dismissed out of hand by some academics today, this trend is gradually changing. The revitalization of anarchism in the late 1990s and early 2000s stimulated scholarly interest in the movement. This new enthusiasm for anarchist thought can be illustrated, *inter alia*, by the creation of the Institute for Anarchist Studies as early as 1996, of the Anarchist Studies Network in 2005, and of the North American Anarchist Studies Network in 2009. In 2011 a conference entitled “The Anarchist Turn” took place at the New School for Social Research in New York.⁶⁹ The first handbook on anarchism was published in 2012 and a second one in 2019.⁷⁰ In France, an academic journal entitled *Réfractives: recherches et expressions anarchistes* came out in 1997 and there have been over a dozen colloquia on anarchism in the past twenty years.⁷¹ Amongst the many French publications on an-

⁶⁸ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Reflections on Anarchism, Revolutionaries. Contemporary Essays*, London, Quartet Books, 1977, pp. 83–4; D. Miller, *Anarchism*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1984, p. 181.

⁶⁹ J. Blumenfield, C. Bottii, & S. Critchley (eds.), *The Anarchist Turn*, London, Pluto Press, 2013.

⁷⁰ R. Kinna (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, London, Bloomsbury, 2012; C. Levy & A. Matthews (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

⁷¹ *Littérature et anarchie*, Grenoble, mars 1994; *La Culture libertaire*, Grenoble, 1996; *Les incendiaires de l’imaginaire*, Grenoble 1998; *Anarchisme et création littéraire*, Paris, novembre 1998; *L’anarchisme a-t-il un avenir ?*, *Histoires de femmes, d’hommes et de leurs imaginaires*, Toulouse, octobre 1999; *Vivre l’anarchie : expériences communautaires et réalisations alternatives anti-autoritaires (XIXe et XXe siècles)*, Ligoure, mai 2009; *Philosophie de l’anarchie : théories libertaire, pratiques quotidiennes et ontologie*, Lyon, mai 2011; *Autorité et liberté : l’anarchie et le problème du politique*, Tours, septembre 2013; *Amérique(s) anarchiste(s)*, Montpellier, octobre 2013; *Proudhon et l’Europe*,

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clear that libertarian ideas and practices now transcend the anarchist movement *sensu stricto*.⁶⁵ They are found, notably, within ecological, antifascist, feminist, anti-war, antinuclear, vegan groups as well as various other militant organisations such as Earth Liberation Front in the USA or the CNT in France and Spain. As Tancrède Ramonet, producer of the Arte documentary *Ni Dieu ni maître, une histoire de l’anarchisme*, puts it: ‘Aujourd’hui ... l’anarchisme a tendance à ne plus dire son nom. Nous sommes bien en présence de mouvements libertaires ou antiautoritaires très importants mais qui ne s’appellent pas anarchistes’.⁶⁶ Discernible anarchist strategies, modes of organisation, and ideological principles have been at the heart of social movements for the past couple of decades. More and more protesters, activists, and militants are, covertly or overly, waving the black flag of anarchism.⁶⁷

Academics have taken a long time to consider anarchism a serious subject of scholarly research. Compared to liberal-

Historically, boycott, sabotage, and the general strike were the three main instances of direct action. Nonviolent forms of direct action were widely used in the United States within the equal rights and environmental movements. Direct action is now widely used by various alter-globalization activists and affinity groups. It can be implemented in a variety of waves, ranging from insurrectionary tactics to the creation of alternative social structures. See Maitron 1975, pp. 302–3.

⁶⁵ This is not an altogether new phenomenon. As early as in 1912, an article from the Manchester Guardian remarked that ‘The number of people in France to whom the term “Anarchist” can properly be applied is ... very considerable, much larger than the number of those who actually apply the title to themselves. The popular association of the term with bombs and outrages, which the Governments and police of all countries encourage, as though all Anarchists were would-be assassins, is mistaken, but it makes many people, whose tendencies are Anarchist in fact shrink from taking the name’. The Paris “Bandits”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1912, p. 6.

⁶⁶ T. Ramonet, Aujourd’hui l’anarchisme a tendance à ne plus dire son nom, *Les Inrockuptibles*, 31 janvier 2017.

⁶⁷ The number of explicitly anarchist organizations has also been growing around the world, from 808 in 1997 to 2171 in 2005. In 2005 they were present in 63 countries. See Williams 2018, p. 3.

ments of the 1960s than to those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Anarchism took a new turn after the fall of the USSR within alter-globalization movements.⁶¹ Events such as the Seattle protest, Occupy Wall Street, the 15M in Spain, Nuit debout and the ZADs in France, the Zapatista movement in Chiapas and the Rojava Revolution in North Syria may not be anarchist per se, but they do incorporate important libertarian elements. Numerous commentators have noted that it is anarchism – more than any other socio-political movement – that animates the visions and tactics of the new social movements against neoliberalism.⁶²

The alter-globalization movement is composed of collectives and affinity groups⁶³ that are outside traditional political organizations and adopt anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical, anti-centralizing, and anti-representational modes of actions and decision-making. They promote autonomous, egalitarian, and consensual organizational methods that strongly echo or parallel anarchist *modus operandi*. Direct action, which seeks to achieve political goals without mediators or intermediaries, is their favoured mode of action.⁶⁴ It is thus

⁶¹ J. Shantz, Beyond the state: the return to anarchy, *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 11, 2003. In France, the return of anarchism on the public scene can be traced back to the strikes of 1995. Cf. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, n.1624; *Minute*, 20 décembre 1995; *Libération*, 21 janvier 1996; *Le Monde*, 4 février 1996.

⁶² Graeber (2002); R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, London, Pluto Press, 2005.

⁶³ An affinity group is an autonomous group of a small number of individuals (c. 5–20 people) who gather around a cause and a tactic and adopt anarchist modes of organization, that is, horizontal, participatory, deliberative, and consensual decision-making processes. It has been argued that the affinity group could form the basis of an anarchist society. See F. Dupuis-Déri, Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 18, n. 1, 2010.

⁶⁴ Direct action can be defined as an action seeking to reach an aim without having recourse to a political intermediary and to make demands directly addressing the public. Direct action originates from revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism. The term was coined by Fernand Pelloutier in 1897.

it, ‘the source of most of what’s new and hopeful about it’.⁵⁵ In the face of the failure of state socialism, historian of communism David Priestland boldly writes that ‘anarchism could help save the world’.⁵⁶ In 2007 political theorist Uri Gordon stated that ‘the past ten years have seen the full-blown revival of anarchism, as a global movement and coherent set of political discourses, on a scale and to levels of unity and diversity unseen since the 1930s’.⁵⁷ Indeed, it is anarchist modes of action and organization that predominate today: ‘from anti-capitalist social centres and eco-feminist communities to raucous street parties and blockades of international summits, anarchist forms of resistance and organizing have been at the heart of the “alternative globalization” movement’.⁵⁸ The position of Marxism as the left-wing political ideology par excellence is gradually being eroded and replaced by anarchist-inspired alter-globalization movements. It is now widely accepted that libertarian ideas, values, and practices are thriving today.⁵⁹ Since the late 1990s anarchism has been driving the radical socio-political movement against neoliberal globalization.

Contemporary expressions of anarchism are found mainly outside official anarchist federations and unions.⁶⁰ Anarchism today is in many ways more akin to the radical social move-

⁵⁵ Graeber 2002, p. 1.

⁵⁶ D. Priestland, Anarchism could help save the world, *The Guardian*, 3 July 2015.

⁵⁷ Gordon 2007, 29.

⁵⁸ Gordon 2007, p. 29.

⁵⁹ E.g. P. Schrembs, *La révolution anarchiste est-elle déjà en acte ? La culture libertaire*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, pp. 203–13; D. Graeber, *The New Anarchists*, *New Left Review*, vol. 13, n. 6, 2002; J. Bowen, & J. Purkis, *Changing Anarchism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004; U. Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!*, London, Pluto Press, 2008; N. Ju & S. Wahl, *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, New York, Lexington Books, 2010.

⁶⁰ D. Williams, Contemporary anarchist and anarchistic movements, *Sociology Compass*, vol. 12, 2018.

percentage of anarchist women was very small indeed: less than 3% according to historian Sophie Kerignard's research.⁵¹ The number of anarchists reached its peak in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Jean Maitron estimates that a little over 100,000 people were influenced by anarchism at the dawn of the twentieth century (1,000 active militants, 4,500 sympathizers, and 100,000 less committed sympathizers).⁵² The most active anarchists were based in and around Paris, which had established itself at the political and intellectual nucleus of France in the 1880s and whose mythical revolutionary heritage was a source of fascination and inspiration for early libertarians.⁵³ The five hundred or so Parisian anarchists converged in poverty-stricken Belleville, in the bohemian Latin Quarter, as well as in the more extravagant and aesthetically-inclined Montmartre.⁵⁴

ii. Anarchism Today

Anarchism is taking centre stage amongst the new social movements of the twenty-first century. It is, as Graeber puts

⁵¹ 2,6%, that is, 37 individuals. S. Kerignard, *Les femmes, les mal entendues du discours libertaire ?*, PhD Thesis, Paris 8, 2004, p. 12.

⁵² J. Maitron, *Le mouvement anarchiste en France*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975, pp. 126–7.

⁵³ A. Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists: Aesthetes and Subversives During the Fin de Siècle*, London, Macmillan, 1997.

⁵⁴ The newspaper *Le Matin* estimated that they were around 500 anarchists in Paris in 1894. *Le Matin*, *Contre l'anarchie*, 9 Mar. 1894. Similar numbers have been provided by scholarly works. Cf. O. Delous, *Les anarchistes à Paris et en banlieue 1880–1914, représentation et sociologie*, Master's dissertation, Université Paris I, 1995–6, p. 93. According to a police investigation, there were between 2,000 and 4,000 anarchists in France in 1897 when the total population was 39,000,000. Cf. A. Moreau, *L'anarchisme en France*, Archives nationales, F7 13053, 1897, p. 25. Similar numbers have been given by previous scholars. Cf. E. Boissard, *Biographie des anarchistes, 1871–1914*, Master's dissertation, Université Paris I, 1991.

À mon grand-père, Un homme de lettres, de racines et d'histoires.

Abstract

This thesis rehabilitates an understudied branch of the libertarian movement, namely French individualist anarchism, which was most active during the Belle Époque. I provide a synthetic examination of the individualist tradition that challenges dominant historical narratives and dissolves the notion of a stable, fixed, and unitary anarchist subject and culture, thereby revealing the plurality, heterogeneity, and rhizomatic nature of the anarchist movement. My analysis of individualist anarchism also helps clarify debates regarding the philosophical orientation and sociological composition of present-day anarchism. I argue that postanarchism can be read as the latest philosophical revival of the individualist tradition. My work contributes to bringing to light the complexity and fecundity of anarchism as a dynamic and holistic social movement, political ideology, and ordinary way of life.

ologies opposed to capitalism were squashed, the influence and diversity of anarchism has been largely underplayed.

France is one of the cradles of anarchism. It is worth noting that virtually all of the main anarchist epithets, symbols, and slogans originated in France.⁴⁶ Proudhon is the first self-proclaimed anarchist: he embraced the label at the end of his 1840 *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* The term libertarian [*libertaire*] was coined by another Frenchman, Joseph Déjacque, in 1857.⁴⁷ The lyrics of the anthem *L'Internationale* were written by Eugène Pottier during the repression of the Paris Commune in 1871. The slogan “No Gods, No Masters” [*Ni Dieu ni maître*] was the title an 1880 journal launched by the revolutionary socialist Louis-August Blanqui. The black flag was first used by Louise Michel and the Canuts in Lyon in 1883. Finally, the A in a circle was created in Paris by the group *Jeunes libertaires* in 1964.⁴⁸ It is sometimes claimed to be taken from Élisée Reclus's claim: ‘L’anarchie est la plus haute expression de l’ordre’ (the circle stands for order).⁴⁹

It has been estimated by various scholars that there were between 2,000 and 5,000 anarchists in France in any given year during the period 1880–1914.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that the

⁴⁶ M. Dubois, Sur la symbolique anarchiste, *Bulletin du CIRA*, n. 62, 2006.

⁴⁷ J. Déjacque, De l'Être-Humain mâle et femelle, *Letter to Proudhon*, New Orleans, 1857.

⁴⁸ G. Chinnici, *A-cerchiata, Storia veridica ed esiti imprevisti di un simbolo*, Milan, Elèuthera editrice, 2008. The origins of the A in a circle have been traced back to nineteenth-century Spain.

⁴⁹ E. Reclus, Développement de la liberté dans le monde, *Le libertaire*, Paris, 1925 [1851].

⁵⁰ Delous's research (1996, p. 93) estimates that there were 511 anarchists in Paris and 2,650 in the rest of France in 1882 (total 3,161); 430 and 4,322 in 1894 (4,752); 564 and 3,881 in 1897 (4,445); 275 and 2,117 in 1912 (2,392). These figures seem to have witnessed little fluctuation during the twentieth century. According to Nicolas Faucier who worked for the *Libertaire*, there were about 3000 members of the *Union anarchiste* in 1938. A 1941 police report estimated that there were between 2000 and 3000 active anarchists during the interwar period.

As soon as they become rulers or representatives of the people [former workers] will cease to be workers and will begin to look upon the whole workers' world from the height of the state. They will no longer represent the people but themselves and their own pretensions to govern the people. Anyone who doubts this is not at all familiar with human nature.⁴¹

In addition, they believed that the root of social ills laid in authority, not merely private property: 'Le principe d'Autorité, voilà le Mal. Le principe de liberté, voilà le remède!' wrote Sébastien Faure.⁴² Non-authoritarian revolutionaries were disparagingly labelled "anarchists" by other socialists – an epithet that they ended up provocatively embracing.⁴³ Expelled from the First International in 1872,⁴⁴ Bakunin and his followers – amongst them Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, and Errico Malatesta – gathered in Saint-Imier, Switzerland where they founded the first anarchist organization – the Anti-Authoritarian International – whose primary aim was the destruction of all political power.⁴⁵ The scission between the authoritarian and non-authoritarian factions of the First International is usually considered to mark the birth of anarchism as an independent political movement. Hence, anarchism grew out of, alongside, but also in opposition to socialism. Until the 1917 Russian Revolution, anarchism was the leading radical political movement worldwide. Since the Second World War, during which all ide-

⁴¹ M. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005 [1873].

⁴² S. Faure, *La Liberté, La Brochure mensuelle*, avril 1935.

⁴³ P. Kropotkin, *Paroles d'un révolté*, Paris, Flammarion 1885, p. 99.

⁴⁴ J-C. Angaut, *Le conflit Marx-Bakounine dans l'Internationale : une confrontation des pratiques politiques*, *Actuel Marx*, n. 41, 2007.

⁴⁵ *Congrès de l'Internationale Anti-Autoritaire*, Saint-Imer, 15–16 septembre 1987, Troisième résolution, Nature de l'action politique du prolétariat.

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Il faut vivre dès aujourd'hui, dès tout de suite, et c'est EN DEHORS de toutes les lois, de toutes les règles, de toutes les théories – même anarchistes – que nous voulons nous laisser aller à nos pitiés, à nos emportements, à nos douceurs, à nos rages, à nos instincts – avec l'orgueil d'être nous-mêmes.

Zo d'Axa

Introduction

This thesis demystifies anarchism by examining prefigurative practices of ordinary life that have not been at the forefront of how the movement is usually perceived in the media and in the popular imagination, and that have not occupied the intellectual foreground in scholarly works. It deals with matters that were always fundamental, yet all too often relegated to the margins of the tradition. In the wild, edges are sites of great biological fertility. Likewise, this investigation seeks to recover some of the rich diversity of the movement. Additionally, it aspires to offer an alternative way into anarchism; a new angle from which to begin to consider the tradition.

Daily and ordinary practices of freedom such as artistic heterodoxies, radical pedagogies, and alternative relationships are hardly ever discussed by historians of anarchism, be it in the classical works of Jean Maitron (1975) and George Woodcock (1962), or in the more recent works of Jean Préposiet (2002) and Philippe Pelletier (2010). If mentioned at all, these subjects are often demoted to the rank of marginalia. Indeed, recent scholarship on French anarchism during the Belle Époque, such as the work of Alexander McKinley (2007), Vivien Bouhey (2009), David Berry (2010), Frederico Ferretti (2013, 2017, 2018), and Constance Bantman (2013, 2017, 2019, 2021) has tended to focus on social anarchism and the labour movement, and figures such as Jean Grave and Élysée Reclus, and Fernand Pelloutier.¹

¹ A. McKinley, *Illegitimate Children of the Enlightenment*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 2007; V. Bouhey, *Les anarchistes contre la République*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009; R. Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Influence of Anarchism in France, Italy, and Spain*, *Anarchist Studies*,

creating an anarchist society.³⁹ On this account, anarchism is originally a Western phenomenon that emerged in opposition to centralized states and to industrial capitalism. It was shaped by the industrial and scientific revolutions as well as by the Enlightenment and by Romanticism.

Let us recall that the industrial revolution led millions of people to emigrate from the countryside to work in urban factories. The existence of these workers was woeful: degrading labour and squalid living conditions reduced them to a state of servitude and misery. Extreme poverty, malnutrition, and disease were rife and only added to the ordeal of their twelve-hour workday. They had no rest day, no health care, and no retirement. In the mid-nineteenth century workers' average life expectancy was little more than 30 years old and half of their children died before reaching the age of six. 'The great thought in all men's minds [was] the emancipation and regeneration of those who toil'.⁴⁰

Along with Marxian and other socialists, anarchists were the main revolutionary forces opposing industrial society and the capitalist order. They shared the same hope for and vision of a communist society. Socialists at the time were divided into two main groups: followers of Marx known as centralists and followers of Bakunin known as collectivists or federalists (later to be known, respectively, as authoritarians or communists and non-authoritarians or libertarians). Their divergence was primarily tactical: the latter did not believe that a revolutionary government – a dictatorship of the proletariat – could secure socialist change and lead to the definite eradication of all state apparatuses. Power, on their view, was inherently and necessarily corrupting. As Bakunin wrote in 1873:

³⁹ The counter-revolutionary state repression was a massacre, causing over 20,000 executions within a single week. Anarchists who were not killed were sent off to the penal colony of New Caledonia or went into exile.

⁴⁰ Anarchism in France, *The Speaker*, 19 November 1892.

find anarchist models in stateless, preliterate societies such as the !Kung of South Africa or the Mbuti of the Congo region.³⁶ Anarchist tendencies can also be found in Medieval times, notably in the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381; during the Renaissance in the writings of such authors as Rabelais or de la Boétie; during the Enlightenment in the works of Diderot or Rousseau; amongst the *Enragé.e.s* of the French Revolution of 1789, as well as during the nineteenth century in the writings of Godwin and Fourier. The list of forebearers of anarchism could easily go on and includes numerous Christian and other radical religious sects.³⁷ The problem is that this may lead to a confusing and overly broad account of anarchism. The urge to revolt against domination and the struggle for individual freedom is probably as old as the existence of authoritarian institutions, if not as old as humanity itself insofar as human relationships are relations of power.³⁸ That said, when regarded as an historically situated ethos, theoretical framework, social ideology and movement, most consider anarchism to have sprung from the European workers' movements in the second half of the nineteenth century along with the main political ideologies of modern society. Though not an anarchist event per se, many viewed the Paris Commune of 1871 – the first successful spontaneous working-class insurrection – as the earliest attempt at

³⁶ In his 1902 *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin claimed that the social order of First Nations people of the Northwest territories was communist. See also E. Reclus, *L'Homme et la Terre*, Paris, Librairie universelle, 1905–1908; P. Clastres, *La Société contre l'État*, Paris, Minuit, 2011 [1974]; F. Perlman, *Against History, Against Leviathan!*, Detroit, Black & Red, 1983; J. Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness*, Los Angeles, Federal House, 2002; I. Pereira, *Vivre en anarchiste*, *Revue du Crieur*, vol. 11, n. 3, 2018.

³⁷ Tolstoy is by far the most often cited Christian anarchist. For examples of religious anarchism, see D. Novak 1958, pp. 315–20, 323; G. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1989, pp. 91–2.

³⁸ E. Reclus, *Les Temps nouveaux*, n. 3, mai 1895; G. Manfredonia, *L'Anarchisme en Europe*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2001, p. 11. 62

This thesis rehabilitates a vastly understudied yet historically significant branch of the French libertarian movement, namely individualist anarchism. As Gaetano Manfredonia, the only scholar who has undertaken a close historical study of anarcho-individualism,² stresses:

Faire dater de l'après Mai 1968 l'apparition de pratiques alternatives visant des réalisations immédiates, s'inscrivant dans le quotidien des militants sans attendre le jour de la révolution, constitue une erreur historique majeure qu'il ne faut pas passer sous silence.³

vol. 17, n. 2, 2009; D. Berry & C. Bantman (eds.), *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour, and Syndicalism*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010; I. L. Horowitz, *Fernand Pelloutier: Irrational State Against Irrational Man*, London Routledge, 2010. D. Berry, *The Search for a Libertarian Communism*, *Libertarian Socialism*, eds. A. Prichard, R. Kinna, S. Pinta & D. Berry, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; C. Bantman, *The French Anarchists in London, 1880–1914*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013; R. Berthier, *Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et anarcho-syndicalisme*, *Dissidences*, n. 5, 2013; T. Rival, *Syndicalistes et libertaires*, Paris, Éditions d'Alternative Libertaire, 2013; I. Pereira, *L'Esprit pragmatiste du syndicalisme révolutionnaire*, *Dissidence*, n. 5, 2013; R. Begouen, *Ouvrières et ouvriers*, Saint-Nazaire: Agora de l'Acharniste, 2015; C. Bantman, *Jean Grave and French Anarchism*, *International Review of Social History*, vol. 62, n. 3, 2017; F. Ferreti, *The Murderous Civilisation*, *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 24, n. 1, 2017; J. W. Stutje, *Charismatic Leadership and Networks in Anarchism*, *International Review of Social History*, vol. 62, n. 3; C. Bantman, *La culture de la campagne médiatique dans le mouvement anarchiste de la Belle Époque*, *Le temps des médias*, vol. 33, n. 2, 2019; C. Bantman, *Jean Grave and the Networks of French Anarchism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. For a relatively comprehensive list of recent French and English scholarship on anarchism in France, see D. Berry, *Anarchists and anarchisms in France since 1945*, *Modern and Contemporary France*, vol. 24, n. 2, 2016.

² See G. Manfredonia, *L'individualisme anarchiste en France (1880–1914)*, PhD Thesis, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 1984.

³ G. Manfredonia, *Anarchisme & changement social. Insurrectionnalisme, syndicalisme, éducationnisme-réalisateur*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 2007, p. 15.

This momentous lacuna is gradually being tackled: independent studies of illegalism,⁴ libertarian colonies,⁵ and to a lesser extent naturianism⁶ and free love⁷ have been published in the past few years. However, no comprehensive piece of scholarship demonstrating the links between these various manifestations of individualism has been published. This thesis works towards providing such a synthesis.

Focusing in on what have hitherto been considered negligible offshoots of the libertarian movement leads us to challenge dominant historical narratives: it calls into question the idea of anarchism as a mere political ideology based upon an official canon with a linear history. Like the Nietzschean genealogist who reveals the historical contingency of our identities, I wish to reconfigure our understanding of anarchism by destabilizing and dissolving the notion of a stable, fixed, and unitary anarchist subject and culture. Taking individualist anarchism as a case study, I offer a refined reading of anarchist history, which yields a more objective picture of the plurality and heterogeneity of the movement. I thus pave the way for a more lucid, constructive, and holistic way of looking at anarchism, namely one that takes into account all facets of anarchism – one with no borders, one that includes women as well artistic and sexual heterodoxies, and one that takes into account the dialectical relation between theory and practice, between the individual and collective, as well as between the human and its environment. By delving into the libertarian past in a more anarchistic fashion, this thesis aspires to take apart the tradition to re-examine its composite elements and to reevaluate some

⁴ A. Steiner, *Les En-dehors*, Montreuil, L'Échappée, 2019.

⁵ C. Beudet, *Les Milieux libres*, Oléron, Éditions Libertaires, 2006.

⁶ A. Baubérot, Les Naturiens libertaires ou le retour à l'anarchisme préhistorique, *Mil Neuf Cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle*, n. 31, 2013, p. 212; F. Jarrige, *Gravelle, Zisly et les anarchistes naturiens contre la civilisation industrielle*, Neuvy-en-Champagne, Le passager clandestin, 2016.

⁷ L. Chrétien, *Amour libre et anarchie*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019.

Anarchism fosters moral indignation and social hope, promotes resistance and solidarity, negates domination, and affirms freedom. The basic anarchist premise is that human flourishing is best achieved by free individuals who consensually collaborate in a non-authoritarian society. Anarchists strive to emancipate themselves from social orders that are not in accord with this goal. Most people agree that actively working towards this objective is a necessary condition for a person to be an anarchist, but not all regard this twofold undertaking as constituting a sufficient condition.³⁴ This is why the question of the roots of anarchism is a moot point, which depends upon how broad or inclusive a view of anarchy one adopts. Is anarchism a timeless human propensity towards freedom or is it a historically situated socio-political tradition? For instance, taking anarchy as a suprahistorical human ethos or as a fundamental anti-authoritarian instinct, some find protolibertarian elements in ancient schools of thought such as Greek and Chinese philosophy (especially Cynicism and Daoism) or early Christianity.³⁵ Drawing upon anthropological studies, others

³⁴ D. Novak, The Place of Anarchism in the History of Political Thought, *The Review of Politics*, vol. 20, n. 3, 1958, pp. 307–311.

³⁵ L. Combes, Diogène. Un Précurseur Anarchiste, *Les Amis du Peuple*, 8 juillet 1858; P. Kropotkin, Anarchism, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1910; La Science moderne et l'anarchie, Paris, P. V Stock, 1913; S. Zaïkowska, Victor Lorenc et sa contribution au naturisme, *Le Végétalien*, 1929; E. Armand, *Les précurseurs de l'anarchisme*, Paris, Éd. de l'en dehors, 1933; P. Marshall, Forerunners of anarchism, *Demanding the Impossible*, London, Fontana Press, 1993; A. Christoyannopoulos (ed.), *Religious Anarchism: New Perspectives*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009; F. L. Bender, Taoism and Western Anarchism, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, n. 10, 1983; D. L. Hall, The Metaphysics of Anarchism, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, n. 10, 1983; J. A. Rapp, *Daoism and Anarchism: Critiques of State Autonomy in Ancient and Modern China*, London, Continuum, 2012. See also M. Nettle, *A Short History of Anarchism*, London, Freedom Press, 1996. Note that several individualists, such as Libertad and Fortuné Henry, were compared to Diogenes (e.g. G. Narrat, La colonie libertaire d'Aiglemont, Publications périodiques de la « Question Sociale », octobre 1997 [1908], p. 14).

us now consider social advances (e.g. free union, birth control, gender equality). In summation, positive anarchism is a form of autarchism based upon a commitment to equality, justice, and solidarity; upon intellectual and moral self-government; as well as upon authentic self-expression and creative experimentation. Anarchism is freedom in action and anarchy is harmony.

Anarchism may be understood as being more than a political ideology, social movement, or radical doctrine; it may be regarded as an existential orientation. In this sense, the anarchist attitude predates the anarchist movement. In fact, most people turn to anarchism not because of an intellectual conversion, but from an inner drive – an instinct to freedom that sociologist Alain Pessin calls ‘la rêverie libertaire’:

Dans toute adhésion à l’anarchisme, la coïncidence théorique est tout à fait seconde. Il y a d’abord la rencontre d’un désir avec des désirs ... c’est une trame de rêves qui d’abord séduit, qui n’ont pas la forme d’élaborations socio-politiques ... mais celle d’une pente de l’esprit, d’un entraînement vital vers ce que l’on veut être.³²

As early as 1895 Augustin Hamon conducted a survey amongst anarchists of various countries to determine the most common libertarian psychological traits, which he concluded were: ‘l’esprit de révolte, l’amour de la liberté, l’amour du moi, l’amour d’autrui, le sentiment de justice, le sens de la logique, la curiosité de connaître, l’esprit de prosélytisme’.³³

³² A. Pessin, Problématique de la culture libertaire, *La culture libertaire*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, p. 11. Note that Pessin links this to a specific libertarian culture.

³³ A. Hamon, *Psychologie de l’anarchiste-socialiste*, Paris, Stock, 1895, p. 17.

of its marginalized facets. It brings to light the complexity and fecundity of anarchism as both a social movement and an ordinary way of life, thereby clarifying disagreements regarding its current evolution and offering insights into its potential advancements.

Only a multidimensional and hence interdisciplinary approach can do justice to anarchism *qua* total social phenomenon, by which I simply mean ‘une curiosité bien maussienne pour les zones de pénombre non fréquentées entre les disciplines ... c’est aussi le refus des hiérarchies prématurées dans l’explication de phénomènes qu’on ne sait pas encore décrire intégralement.’⁸ Using methodological perspectives from both the social sciences and the humanities, this thesis brings together the fields of late modern French intellectual and cultural history, contemporary political philosophy, as well as sociology. I recover unfairly forgotten figures and ideas in the history of anarchism in France and use ideal types to capture different individualist modes of action and critique contemporary French sociological studies. Although anarchism is an inherently transnational movement, I have chosen to focus upon French and English sources.⁹ This Western-centric – and mainly Eurocentric – investigatory delimitation constitutes an obvious limitation to this study, which is nonetheless necessary if it aspires to be rigorous and comprehensive. My historical examination of French individualist anarchism focuses primarily upon the period between 1880 and 1914, for it is the tradition was most active.

⁸ C. Tarot, Du fait social de Durkheim au fait social de Maus, *Revue européenne des sciences sociale*, vol. 34, n. 34, 1996, p. 122.

⁹ It is worth noting many anarchists in France were immigrants (coming especially from Italy and Eastern Europe) fleeing persecution from their native country. One of the earliest individualist groups, *Gli intransigenti*, was Italian. For examples of current research on anarchism in Spain; Portugal; Germany; Russia; China; the Low Countries, Latin America; Scandinavia, see R. Kinna (ed.), Materials for Further Research, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, London, Bloomsbury, 2012.

Later developments will also be outlined to provide a broad overview of the evolution of the movement to the present day. My examination of postanarchism revolves mainly around English-speaking scholars as it is a school of thought most developed in the AngloAmerican academic world. Finally, my sociological account of present-day anarchists focuses on French society as an exemplar of contemporary Western anarchism.

I am aware of the plurality of individualist traditions. Individualist grew and spread throughout the USA, the UK,¹⁰ Spain,¹¹ Italy,¹² but also Colombia and Brazil.¹³ The American individualist tradition is perhaps the best known and most widely studied. The French expression of individualist anarchism, on the other hand, is virtually unknown. For example, Benjamin Franks's chapter on anarchism in the *Oxford Handbook of Political Ideology* (2013) reduces individualist anarchism to an American phenomenon.

American and French individualism are distinct traditions with different ideological underpinnings and political practices.¹⁴ American individualist anarchism predates French and other continental expressions of individualism. It promotes free economic competition, maximum individual freedom, and minimum state power. Its key proponents are Warren, Spooner, and Tucker. American individualist anarchism

¹⁰ P. Ryley, Individualist Anarchism in late Victorian Britain, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 20, n. 2, 2012.

¹¹ X. Diez, *El anarquismo individualista en España (1923–1939)*, Barcelona, Virus editorial, 2007.

¹² M. Novelli, *La furibonda anarchia*, Bra, Araba Fenice, 2007. See also J. J. Martin, *Men Against the State*, Colorado Springs, Ralph Myles Publisher, 1970; F. H. Brooks (ed.), *The Individualist Anarchists*, New Brunswick, Transaction, 1994.

¹³ M. M. Leite, *Maria Lacerda de Moura: uma feminista utópica*, Santa Cruz do Sul, Editora Mulheres, 2005.

¹⁴ For example, as we shall see, Proudhon has very little impact on French individualism, unlike American individualism.

those determined by the laws of our own individual nature.²⁹

Finally, anarchists promote unity within this diversity through voluntary cooperation and association with other individuals. The libertarian society is one wherein collective action is based upon altruism, solidarity, and mutual aid. As Malatesta wrote:

Out of the free collaboration of everyone, thanks to the spontaneous combination of men in accordance with their needs and sympathies, from the bottom up, from the simple to the complex, starting from the most immediate interests and working towards the most general, there will arise a social organization, the goal of which will be the greatest well-being and fullest freedom of all ... Such a society of free human beings, such a society of friends, is Anarchy.³⁰

Signac's divisionist painting *Au temps d'harmonie* illustrates the vision of a unified whole that respects the autonomy of each element.³¹ As lovers of liberty and equality, anarchists are existential utopians. They want to be autonomous moral agents, loyal comrades, critical thinkers, self-affirming free spirits, creative and original individuals. It should thus not come as a surprise that anarchists sought to revolutionize all domains of life, including education, sexuality, diet, and the place of women in society, thereby pioneering what many of

²⁹ M. Bakunin, Man, Society, and Freedom, S. Dolgoff (ed. and trans.), *Bakunin and Anarchy*, London, Vintage Books, 1971 [1871], pp. 261–2.

³⁰ E. Malatesta, *Anarchy*, London, Freedom Press, 1891.

³¹ Divisionism is Signac's preferred term for "pointillism". Signac originally wanted to call the painting "Au temps d'anarchie", but he changed the titled because of the repression of 1894. See also Henry-Edmond Cross, *L'air du soir* (1894).

individualist Robert Collino (aka Ixigrec)²⁶ pointed out, ‘Le rejet de l’autorité est une négation, la vie est une affirmation. On peut s’accorder sur un plan négatif et ne pouvoir le faire sur le plan affirmatif.’²⁷ At the most basic level, anarchists aspire to create a just social order that fosters self-realization. First, equality is regarded as a prerequisite for personal freedom. The interdependence of equality and liberty is a core tenant of anarchism. As Bakunin wrote: ‘I am only free when all human beings surrounding me ... are equally free’.²⁸ Second, anarchists are committed to autonomy in the sense of self-mastery, self-affirmation, and selfcreation. They envision a society wherein individuals determine their own affairs and subject their decisions to their own rational judgment. In other words, they wish to cultivate their intellectual integrity and moral responsibility. Additionally, they wish for each person to be able to explore, exercise, and develop their personal capacities, their unique personality, their creativity, and their originality. As Bakunin wrote:

I am a fanatic lover of liberty ... the only kind of liberty that is worth the name, liberty that consists in the full development of all the material, intellectual, and moral powers that are latent in each person; liberty recognizes no restrictions other than

²⁶ Ixigrec (Robert Collino) was born in Marseille. His father was a chemist. He may have been a member of the Bascon colony. He worked as a decorator after the Great War. He collaborated to several individualist journals, including *La Vie anarchiste* (1911–1914), *l’anarchie*, *L’En-dehors*, *l’Unique*, and *Ego* (1968–1971). He was also a painter. He was one of the main individualist contributors to the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁷ Ixigrec, in *E. Armand, sa vie, sa pensée, son œuvre*, Paris, La ruche ouvrière, 1964 [1904], p. 54.

²⁸ M. Bakunin, *Man, Society, and Freedom*, S. Dolgoff (ed. and trans.), *Bakunin and Anarchy*, London, Vintage Books, 1971 [1871].

evolved by and large independent from European anarchism. American individualism can be regarded as a radicalisation of democratic ideals, whereas European individualism sprang from the workers’ movement. It had almost no influence upon early French anarcho-individualism.¹⁵ The ideas of individualists like Tucker and John-Henry Mackay were only introduced to the French anarchist intelligentsia during the interwar period thanks to Armand’s translation of some of their works, when the individualist tradition in France had already been well established.¹⁶ Thus, American individualist anarchism and French anarcho-individualism may be considered independently.¹⁷

¹⁵ Most French anarchists have dismissed American individualists’ defence of total economic freedom as a mere apology of bourgeois society.

¹⁶ Manfredonia 1984, p. 14. 17

¹⁷ For American individualists, property is a mark of individual freedom. Yet the kind of property in question is not the capitalist property of means of production, but that which has been gained through one’s work. Capital should be redistributed so that each individual benefit from the entire product of their work. There can be no accumulation of capital gain. American individualist does share some similarities with anarcho-individualism. Notably, it rejects traditional methods of insurrection in favour of non-violent action, such as civil disobedience, the founding of communes, and individual education. Considered as a whole, however, it differs from anarcho-individualism in several key aspects. Let us look at three of these. American individualism draws upon classical liberalism. In liberalism, a person’s autonomy is limited, for it is dependent upon pre-established values. First, the liberal tradition embraces the intrinsic value of the individual. But the individual is considered as an abstract entity. Anarcho-individualism rejects all transcendence and considers the individual as a socio-historical construct. Second, libertarianism holds that personal interests always coincide with collective interest. Individual action is thus subordinated to a projected social good. The anarchoindividualist seeks their personal enjoyment. The only limit to freedom is one’s own will, strength, and desire. Third, in liberal societies, citizens do not use their individual freedom to call into question the established order, for they have freely assented to a social contract. Conversely, anarcho-individualists reject the notion of a social contract that established a fixed social order. They wish to be able to break freely agreed pact at any

The historiography of the French tradition has been ignored and neglected. It is the uniqueness of this tradition that I wish to recover here. Other individualist figures (e.g. Renzo Novatore, Maria Lacerda de Moura, Voltarine de Cleyre) and traditions from the US to the UK are undoubtedly of great significance; however, they stray beyond the scope of this thesis.

It is crucial that most of this study's historical inquiry be based on non-academic material and be grounded in praxis, for individualism – like the anarchist movement as a whole – consists first and foremost of modes of revolutionary action rather than collections of conceptual texts. Individualists were rarely intellectuals, let alone scholars; they were mainly self-taught essayists, propagandists, radical activists, and social experimenters. Their approach was more existential and pragmatic than analytical and theoretical. That said, the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of critical thought was always of great importance to them as evidenced by the numerous debates and discussions in which they took part. Indeed, propaganda by the mouth was always at the centre of their militant activities. Individualists sought means of producing and spreading knowledge outside state institutions. They wrote articles for pamphlets, brochures, newspapers, and other polemical works, and organized talks in self-managed community centres. Individualist journals constituted essential primary sources for my historical investigation, for individualists were almost all part of a network that gravitated towards journals based in or around Paris and that revealed different tendencies within the tradition.¹⁸ Additionally, I

time. Using one's freedom to go against the established order, whichever it may be.

¹⁸ *L'Endehors* (Zo d'Axa, 1891–1893) ; *Le Naturien* (Émile Gravelle 1898) ; *La Feuille* (Zo d'Axa, 1897–1899) *L'Ere Nouvelle* (E. Armand, Marie Kügel, 1901–1911) ; *L'anarchie* (Libertad, Anna Mahé et Armandine Mahé, 1905–1914) ; *L'Idée libre* (André Lorulot, 1911–1940) ; *...hors du troupeau* (E. Armand, 1911–1912) ; *Les Réfractaires* (E. Armand, 1912–1914) ; *La Vie Anar-*

docile, dependent, and psychologically repressed automatons. Challenging the status quo more than any other political movement, anarchism is a 'passion for destruction', as Mikhail Bakunin – the leader of the anti-authoritarian faction of the First International – once described it, insofar as it seeks to eradicate all authoritarian and dehumanizing regimes.²³ Anarchists are anti-authoritarian iconoclasts, defiant dissidents, subversive rebels, incorrigible agonists, irreverent insurgents, but they are also – perhaps first and foremost – ordinary, indignant individuals who fight against injustice and yearn for greater freedom. The struggle for freedom starts with disobedience. Revolt against oppression is justice in motion.

Despite its epistemology and reputation, anarchism is not an exclusively negative enterprise. It should not be described solely in terms of opposition. It is a simultaneously destructive and a constructive endeavour: 'destruam et aedificabo', I destroy in order to build, stated Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first self-proclaimed anarchist.²⁴ Anarchism does not merely defend negative freedom (freedom *from*), it also promotes positive freedom (freedom *to* or *for*).²⁵ Differently put, anarchism rejects coercive forms of power (*potestas*, power *over*) but embraces constructive power (*potentia*, power *to*). What, then, is this 'positive anarchy'? The answer to this question differs greatly across factions of anarchism. As the

²³ M. Bakunin, *On Anarchism*, ed. S. Dologoff, Montreal, Black Rose, 1980 [1876], p. 57.

²⁴ P.-J. Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques, ou, Philosophie de la misère*, Paris, M. Rivière, 1923 [1846], p. 174.

²⁵ This is one of the reasons why the term "libertarian" is sometimes used to refer to the constructive side of anarchism. The term "libertarian" [*libertaire*] was coined by the French worker and poet Joseph Déjacque in 1857 to denounce a type of anarchism that was not sufficiently radical. J. Déjacque, *De l'Être-Humain mâle et femelle, Letter to Proudhon*, New Orleans, 1857.

a ruler” or more broadly “without authority”. Negatively, anarchism is synonymous with anti-authoritarianism. ‘On devient anarchiste par sentiment et par raisonnement’, claimed the feminist individualist anarchist Sophie Zaïkowska,²¹ ‘Le raisonnement est ... le même pour tous les anarchistes, il se base sur l’observation des faits qui montre que sous le joug de l’autorité ... l’individu ne vit pas heureux’.²² The authority in question is primarily understood as domination, that is, fixed, unconsented, unquestionable, and coercive relations of power. It can come from gods, legislators, political leaders, bosses, priests, police, teachers, judges, husbands, parents, or norms, traditions, and social conventions. In short, it is anything that compels the individual to think and act in a particular way. More broadly, anarchists oppose all systems of domination and exploitation. Historically, the state, alongside the Church and capitalism, were often viewed as the fountainheads of exclusion and oppression. They are institutional loci of violence, externally imposed rules, and hierarchical class divisions. Anarchists do not refuse order as such, but the established social order – an order that is regarded as fundamentally unjust, exploitative, anomic, morally debilitating, and self-alienating. It breeds conformity, indifference, and hypocrisy, and creates

²¹ Sophie Zaïkowska was born in Vilna (Russian Empire, present day Vilnius, Lithuania). She was one of the most active female individualists in the early twentieth century. She self-identified as a feminist individualist anarchist. She moved to France in 1898 after having studied physical and natural sciences (specializing in nutrition) in Geneva. She wrote in numerous anarchist journals, including *L’Éducation libertaire* (1900–1902), *l’Autarcie* (1903), *La Vie anarchiste* (which she directed in 1920), and *Le Néo-naturien* (1921–1927). With her partner and collaborator Georges Butaud, she co-founded three libertarian colonies (Vaux, Saint-Maur, Bascon) as well as the *Foyer végétalien* in Nice and Paris, and the journal *Le Végétalien* (1924–1929), of which she took full charge after Butaud’s death in 1926. She was a great advocate and theoretician of veganism and wrote the entry *Végétalisme* in Sebastien Faure’s *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²² S. Zaïkowska, *La vie et la mort de Georges Butaud*, Nice, Rosentitel, 1929, p. 18.

scrutinized brochures, which were another central means of disseminating ideas within the anarchist milieu. They were tools of propaganda, written for or after public debates. Finally, I examined letters, memoirs, and biographies in hopes of better reflecting activists’ concerns and practices. I carried out archival research at the *Archives nationales*, the *Institut français d’histoire sociale* (IFHS), and the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BnF). Police reports from the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* also proved to be a rich source of documentation. Much information was found at the CIRA (*Centre International de Recherches sur l’Anarchisme*) in both Marseille and Lausanne as well as the DIRA (*Documentation, Information, Référence et Archives*) in Montreal.

This thesis is divided into three main parts. In Part I, I first offer a brief introduction to anarchism, which is a necessary preamble as misconceptions about the movement still abound. Second, I situate the developments of anarchism in the West over the past two decades and present the emergence of anarchist studies as an academic discipline in the French- and English-speaking worlds. Third, I look at one of the latest philosophical accounts of anarchism, namely postanarchism. I focus on the work of Saul Newman who is the main proponent of the tradition. By reconsidering anarchist historiography, I demonstrate that the postanarchist enterprise can be regarded as a latter-day expression of individualist anarchism. The second part and bulk of this thesis focuses on individualist anarchism as a remarkable tradition that deserves its place in the history of anarchism. I begin by highlighting the challenges associated with examining this little-known tradition before providing a brief history of individualism, focusing on its two

chiste (Georges Butaud et Sophie Zaïkowska, 1911–1913) ; *Pendant la Mêlée* (E. Armand, 1915–1916), *par delà la Mêlée* (E. Armand, 1916–1918) ; *Le Néo-naturien* (Louis Rimbault, 1921–1925, 1927) ; *L’Ordre Naturel* (Henri Zisly, 1920–1922) ; *L’En-Dehors* (E. Armand, 1922–1939) ; *L’Unique* (E. Armand, 1945–1956).

main waves during the Belle Époque (1880–1900 and 1900–1914). Secondly, I look at the ideological and practical core of the tradition and lay special emphasis on its influence on the rest of the libertarian movement at the time. Thirdly, I distinguish between three historical and theoretical ideal types based on individualist modes of action, namely insurrectionist, egoist, and constructivist. Finally, I delve deeper into the history of individualism through these ideal types. I show that the prefigurative *asceticism* of individualism anarchism anticipated various poststructuralist insights, making it postanarchist *avant la lettre*, and that its advocates represent some of the unfairly forgotten figures of French political and cultural history.¹⁹ In the third and final part of this work, I return to postanarchism and examine its latest developments. I then show that the recovery of individualist anarchism sheds light on the present-day divide between self-identified anarchists and other radicals of the far left, both of whom can be considered to belong to the broad libertarian movement. I thus demonstrate that there are conceptual and sociological continuities between past expressions of anarchism and new social movements against neoliberalism.²⁰ I conclude that neo or postanarchism exemplifies how

¹⁹ I tried my best to retrieve women's voices. Unfortunately, their recorded presence is scarce and fragmentary. Oftentimes, their names go uncited: they are mentioned in passing as a comrade's partner (*compagne*). In a 1912 article entitled *Sur les compagnes* Henriette Rousselet lamented the small number of genuine anarchist women: 'Je constate avec regret que parmi nous les femmes sont rares et celles qui viennent dans nos groupements ne sont pour ainsi dire pas anarchistes et ne font rien pour le devenir'. See H. Rousselet, *La Vie Anarchiste*, n. 10, 1 mai 1912.

²⁰ I am here referring to the distinction between two distinct political cultures or two main trends within broad libertarian tradition that many authors have drawn. Theorists give these two groups different names such as "small-a anarchists" and "capital-A anarchists". Cf. M Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, San Francisco, AK Press, 1995; M. Schmidt & L. van der Walt, *Black Flame*, Oakland, AK Press, 2001; D. Graeber, *The New Anarchists*, *New Left Review*, n. 13, 2002; U. Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!*, London, Pluto Press, 2008; S. Luck, *Sociologie de l'engagement libertaire dans*

novelists such as Ursula LeGuin in the USA and Alain Damasio in France offer an insight into what an anarchist social order could look like. New, creative, and playful anarchist tactics and symbols are seeing the light of day. Colourful and cheerful insurrectionary festivals, ludic anticapitalist carnivals with radical activists donning a red nose, or graffiti of an A in a heart are giving anarchism a new face.¹⁸ Numerous affinity groups and collectives, albeit not avowedly anarchist, follow essentially libertarian modes of organization, coordination, and action. It is not entirely accurate to talk about a *revival* of anarchism, for it would fail to do justice to the many advocates of anarchism throughout the twentieth century.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is fair to say that there is a renewal of interest in the movement characterized, notably, by a wish to find commonalities with non-anarchist groups. Anarchism is gaining force, traction, and momentum worldwide and has promising prospects for further advancement. It may just be, as the anthropologist David Graeber claimed in 2004, the revolutionary movement of the twenty-first century.²⁰

The anarchist movement is complex, diverse, and constantly evolving. In essence, anarchists oppose all forms of illegitimate authority and promote individual freedom. From the Greek *an-archos*, anarchy literally means "without

¹⁸ S. Sheehan, *Anarchism*, London, Reaktion Books, 2003, p. 17; F. Dupuis-Déri, *Les nouveaux anarchistes*, Paris, Éditions Textuel, 2018.

¹⁹ Honeywell 2012, pp. 111–39. A few names of twentieth-century proponents of anarchism come to mind: in the UK: Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, Colin Ward, and Sydney Parker; in North America: Paul Goodman, Georges Woodcock, and Murray Bookchin; and in France: Daniel Guérin, Henri Avron, and André Arru, not to mention the many sympathisers with the movement such as Huxley, Orwell, Camus, Foucault, Guattari, and artists such as Georges Brassens, Léo Ferré, John Cage, Julian Beck, and Judith Malina.

²⁰ D. Graeber & A. Grubačić, *Anarchism, Or the Revolutionary Movement of the Twenty-First Century*, *ZNet, Vision & Strategy*, 6 January 2004. 44

The association of anarchy with social mayhem remains deeply embedded in both the popular and theoretical imagination. Indeed, the stereotypical image of the anarchist as a terrorist or a nihilist and that of the state of anarchy as a condition of disorder and anomia endure.¹⁴ Yet these biased stigmatizations are gradually being eroded. Anarchism has been gaining greater public visibility and intellectual recognition as a compelling political orientation as well as a cogent approach to the changing social realities of the twenty-first century.¹⁵ Prominent individuals such as the American linguist Noam Chomsky, the former British diplomat Carne Ross,¹⁶ and the former French deputy Isabelle Attard have overtly defended the relevance and viability of the anarchist enterprise.¹⁷ Highprofile

London, Bloomsbury, 2012, pp. 115, 128–9; B. J. Pauli, Pacifism, nonviolence, and the reinvention of anarchist tactics in the twentieth century, *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 9, n. 1, 2015; E. Frazer & K. Hutchins, Anarchist Ambivalence, *European Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 18, n. 2, 2019. Note also that anarchist acts of violence differ from acts of terror. For a refutation of the association of anarchism with terrorism, see D. Colson, *Petit lexique philosophique de l'anarchisme*, Paris, Poche, 2001; P. Pelletier, *Anarchisme vent debout!*, Paris, Le Cavalier Bleu, 2018 [2013], pp. 107–17.

¹⁴ E.g. T. Dunne, Anarchiste et Al-Qaeda, *La Presse*, 8 juillet 2005; J. L. Gelvin, Al-Qaeda and Anarchism, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 20, n. 4, 2008. Some states still label anarchists as terrorists. See. C. J. Beck & E. Miner, Who gets designated a terrorist and why?, *Social Forces*, vol. 91, n. 1, 2013. Mass media often refers to anarchy as chaos. See P. V. Stock, Katrina and anarchy, *Sociological Spectrum*, vol. 27, 2007.

¹⁵ Luck 2008, p. 685.

¹⁶ Once a civil servant in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Carne Ross came to embrace anarchism. He recounts his transition in a 2017 documentary entitled *The Accidental Anarchist*. Tancrède Ramonet's three-part documentary *Ni Dieu ni Maître, Une histoire de l'anarchisme*, broadcast on Arte in 2016, is one of the latest popular attempts to demystify anarchism in France. Note that Arte refused to broadcast the third part of the documentary, which deals with the contemporary era (1945–2001). They did not justify this rejection and did not reply to my emails.

¹⁷ Isabelle Attard is a French archeozoologist, museum director, and former ecology deputy. See I. Attard, *Comment je suis devenue anarchiste*, Paris, Seuil, 2019.

anarchism is constantly renewing itself, for it evolves concomitant with the ever-changing and multifarious demands for resistance. Anarchism has always been and will continue to be a social movement, political ideology, and way of life striving towards every greater freedom for both the individual and the collective. I suggest that another productive approach for contemporary anarchist studies is to provide more refined empirical accounts of anarchist practices on the ground. Finally, I argue that our current need is to move beyond individualism *sensu stricto* and to retrieve the social dimension of the anarchist endeavour.

Clarity demands that the terminology used throughout this thesis be specified. The phrases individualist anarchism and anarchist individualism are used interchangeably as it was the case in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France as well as in the historical literature. For the sake of simplicity, I also sometimes use the more recent phrase anarcho-individualism. Unless otherwise specified, the term individualism refers to anarcho-individualism. Mainstream anarchism should be understood as an umbrella terms covering the dominant, non-individualist branches of anarchism in the fin-de-siècle and Belle Époque periods led by such individuals as Kropotkin, Malatesta, and, notably, Jean Grave and his journals *Le Révolté* (1879–1887), *La Révolte* (1887–1894), and *Les Temps Nouveaux* (1895–1914, 1919–1921). Individualists at the time also talked about socialist anarchism or libertarian socialism to refer to the rest of the anarchist movement. Classical anarchism refers to all manifestations of anarchism (including individualism), from the birth of the movement in the second half of the nineteenth century to the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939. The words anarchist and libertarian are to be read as synonyms when used in the context of the late nineteenth

la France contemporaine, PhD thesis, Université Panthéon Sorbonne, Paris I, 2008.

and early twentieth centuries. I favour the former, for it is how most individualists self-identified, but I shall also use the later to avoid inelegant repetitions.²¹ It is worth pointing out that the term libertarian has come to take on wider connotations that are beyond the scope of this study.²² When talking about contemporary times, I use the term libertarian (or the phrase “the (broad) libertarian movement”) to include radicals of the far left who do not necessarily identify with the anarchist movement (also called by many other names such as “non-anarchists”). I refrain from using the word *acracy* [*acracia*], commonly cited in Hispanic libertarian publications as a more positive-sounding alternative to anarchy.²³ Finally, the term postanarchism encompasses all philosophical attempts to rethink anarchism through the lens of poststructuralist thought.

²¹ Note that anarcho-individualists called themselves *camarades*, while other anarchist favoured the denomination *compagnons* (fem. *compagne*). Today, the word *copain* (fem. *copine*) is commonly used in French activist circles.

²² Note that the term is multivocal. Although Déjacque coined it to criticize an anarchism that was not radical enough, some early-twentieth-century individualists defined the libertarian as a moderate anarchist. E.g. H. Zisly, *Anarchistes ou libertaires*, *L'anarchie*, n. 75, 13 septembre 1906. More recently, libertarianism tends to be associated with the far right, whereas anarchism is associated with the radical left. In French, a distinction is made between *libertarien*, which is linked to what David Friedman (1973) called “anarcho-capitalism” (cf. Ayn Rand’s ‘minarchism’) and *libertaire*, which reflects cultural liberalism and anti-authoritarian values.

²³ The term *acracy* is thought to have been coined by the Catalan syndicalist Rafael Farga i Pellicer in 1886 who founded a journal called *acracia*. Like the word “libertarian” it was originally put forth as an alternative to the negatively connotated term “anarchy”. In France, it was used as early as in the 1900s by Charles Péguy in his lectures at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

end is social harmony.¹⁰ As the revolutionary Errico Malatesta stated:

There can be no doubt that the Anarchist Idea, denying government, is by its very nature opposed to violence, which is the very essence of every authoritarian system ... Anarchy is freedom in solidarity. It is only through the harmonizing of interests, through voluntary co-operation, through love, respect, and reciprocal tolerance, by persuasion, by example, and by the contagion of benevolence, that it can and ought to triumph.¹¹

It should also be pointed out that pacifism was central to the development of anarchism in the twentieth century and that most anarchists today favour non-violent modes of action.¹² Suffice to say, violence is not an intrinsic feature of anarchism.¹³

¹⁰ For a distinction between different forms of violence, see Manières d’agir, *Monde libertaire*, mai-juin 2014.

¹¹ E. Malatesta, *Anarchy and Violence*, *The Method of Freedom*, Chico, CA, AK Press, 2014 [1894].

¹² By violence I mean behaviour that involves hurting or killing sentient beings, excluding acts intended to damage or destroy inanimate objects. The Zapatista revolt and the Rojava revolution are the two main, large-scale exceptions to this trend today.

¹³ For further discussion see D. Novak, *Anarchism and Individual Terrorism*, *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 20, n. 2, 1954, p. 176; B. Epstein, *Political Protest and cultural revolution*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1991; A. Chan, *The Creative Urge*, PhD Thesis, University of Bristol, 1993; M. Pucciarelli, *L’imaginaire des libertaires aujourd’hui*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1999, p. 174; X. Bekaert, *Anarchisme violence et non-violence*, Paris, Éditions du Monde Libertaire, 2000; H. Day, *Anarchie et non-violence*, Le Havre, Éd. du Monde libertaire, 2005; B. Franks, *Rebel Alliances*, Edinburgh, AK Press, 2006, pp. 139–53; S. Luck, *Sociologie de l’engagement libertaire dans la France contemporaine*, PhD Thesis, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris I, 2008, pp. 388–9, 447; C. Honeywell, *Bridging the Gaps*, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, ed. R. Kinna,

the anti-authoritarian and anti-hierarchical violence of the oppressed is incommensurable with that of coercive intuitions seeking to protect and maintain their privileges.⁸ In any case, anarchists' advocacy of social transformation does not make them fanatics. On the contrary, their strategies for emancipation from oppression are manifold and carefully thought out. They do include violent tactics such as propaganda by the deed and guerrilla warfare, but also comprise non-violent ones such as the general strike and civil disobedience. The question of the use of violence is, and has always been, controversial insofar as violence implies coercion, constraint, or obligation, which are fundamentally antimonic to anarchy. Whilst some anarchists believe that violence is a painful necessity (e.g. Bakunin, Malatesta, Bonnano), others reject it altogether as ineffective and are committed pacifists (e.g. Ryner, Armand, Goodman, Comfort).⁹ It is true that feelings of rage, vengeance, and resentment lay at the root of many instances of insurrection and that anarchist propaganda is imbued with violent rhetoric. That said, even those who uphold various forms of violence as an essential part in the revolutionary process merely see it as unintended harm for their ultimate

Part I

other revolutionary movements. Asal and Rethemeyer argue that anarchists are 'the least likely to kill of ideological types that we could test probabilistically'. See V. Asal and R. K. Rethemeyer, Dilletantes, ideologues, and the weak, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25, 2008, p. 257.

⁸ See Bufacci's distinction between minimal and comprehensive violence. V. Bufacci, Two Concepts of Violence, *Political Studies Review*, vol. 3, n. 2, 2005.

⁹ X. Bekaert, Le principe de la non-violence, *Relations*, n. 682, février 2003; X. Bekaert, *Anarchisme. Violence et non-violence. Petite anthologie de la révolution non-violente chez les principaux précurseurs et théoriciens de l'anarchisme*, Paris, Les éditions du Monde Libertaire, 2000; A. Bernard & P. Sommermeyer, *Désobéissances libertaires : manière d'agir et autres façons de faire*, Paris, nada, 2014 ; <http://anarchismenonviolence2.org/>.

I- Anarchism

i. A Social Movement and Form-of-Life

*C'est un malfaiteur, un philosophe, un anarchiste !
Il fera le malheur de tous avec ses utopies, c'est un
ennemi du peuple.*

Victor Barrudand

Anarchism is a contentious, enigmatic, and nebulous subject. As a political movement, it is all too often misconstrued and distorted: when not trivialized or censored, it is maligned and demonized.

For the general public, the figure of the anarchist brings to mind bomb-throwing terrorists, violent strikers, or unprincipled vandals. In France, one may recall the bombings of Ravachol, the assassination of President Sadi Carnot, or the robberies of the Bonnot Gang during the heyday of anarchism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today one may think of the black bloc composed of alleged hooligans who set cars on fire, smash symbols of multinational power, and cast cobblestones at law enforcement officials. Historically, anarchy was an epithet of political abuse (as was the term democracy) connoting social mayhem.¹ Anyone who challenged the

¹ E. Malatesta, *L'anarchie*, Saint-Louis, MO, Dialectics, 2014 [1891], p. 3; F. Depuis-Déri, *L'anarchie expliquée à mon père*, Montreal, Lux Éditeur, 2014, pp. 11–7. Plato and Aristotle described democracy as anarchy insofar as it is, by definition, a regime without a ruler. Cf. *The Republic*, VII, 557e2–4, 558c4. See also F. Dupuis-Déri, *Démocratie. Histoire politique d'un mot*, Montréal, Lux, 2013.

sociopolitical orthodoxy could be accused of being an anarchist. Artistic depictions of anarchy as the quintessence of disorder abound ranging from a mad blindfolded woman in rags with dishevelled hair, a broken sceptre, and a shattered yoke lying at her feet² to portrayals of monsters and demons, such as dragons, gargoyles, or Hydra – the many-headed serpent.³ Literary representations of anarchists in the novels of Zola, Henry James, and Chesterton also portray anarchists as dangerous perpetrators of chaos.⁴ The list of disparaging descriptions of anarchism, often propagated by the media and state actors, is a very long one indeed. The recurrent message is clear: anarchism wreaks havoc on society.

The overemphatic association of anarchism and violence is an ill-founded generalization and demonization. The purported denunciation of violence is incessantly rehashed by detractors of anarchism with the aim of discrediting the movement. All revolutionary movements, indeed, all attempts to bring about radical social change, are bound to include some form of violence. Anarchism has no monopoly on political violence.⁵ Political assassinations, which are perhaps most closely linked to anarchism, were committed in much greater number by nationalists, republicans, or Marxists.⁶ In fact, compared to other socio-political movements, there were relatively few anarchist acts of violence.⁷ What is more,

² P. Miquel, *Les anarchistes*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2003, p. 22.

³ E.g. Ingres's *The Apotheosis of Napoleon*, 1853.

⁴ Henry James's *The Princess Cassimassima* (1886); H. G. Wells's *The Stolen Bacillus* (1894); Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907); G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908); Zola's *Germinal*. For further discussion, see P. Gibbard, *Anarchism in English and French literature, 1885–1914*, PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2001.

⁵ P. Kropotkin, *Anarchism: its philosophy and ideal*, London, Freedom, 1897.

⁶ M. Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2001.

⁷ It has been estimated that about 200 individuals were assassinated by anarchists between 1880 and 1914. Anarchism was in fact less violent than

as Libertad,²² Lorulot,²³ Mauricius,²⁴ and later Armand and Victor Serge (aka Le Rétif),²⁵ severely criticized syndicates

²² Libertad (Albert Joseph) was born in Bordeaux of unknown parents. In spite of being crippled and walking on crutches, he was one of the most dynamic anarchist propagandists who embodied the idea of permanent revolt. He was a forthright and irreverent orator who often got into brawls. He came in Paris in 1897, age 21, alone and penniless. He found shelter at the head office of the newspaper *Libertaire*. He was influenced by his close friend Paraf-Javal with whom he launched the *causerie populaire* movement in 1902 and with whom he eventually fell out. Along with his partners, the sisters Anna and Armandine Mahé, he founded the seminal journal *l'anarchie* (1905–1914), which became the centrepiece of the individualist movement in the early twentieth century. Its headquarters also became an urban individualist colony.

²³ Lorulot was born in Paris. His father was a lithographer, and his mother was a milliner. He left school at age 14 to work for a watchmaker then in a print shop. He met Libertad in 1905 and became one of the initiators of *l'anarchie*. With his partner Émilie Lamotte he co-founded the *milieu libre de Saint-Germain-en-Laye* (Seine-et-Oise) in 1906. In 1909 Lorulot became the director of *l'anarchie*. He moved the journal's head office to Romainville, where he founded an urban colony that was intended to follow strict hygienist principles (veganism, no intoxicants, regular physical exercise). He stepped down from the direction of *l'anarchie* at the end of 1911 to establish his own journal, *L'Idée libre*. In 1912 he entered into a relationship with Jeanne Giorgis, who was the wife of the individualist Brutus Bèlardi. He collaborated to Devaldes's journal *Le Réveil de l'esclave* in 1920. In 1921 he founded the *Fédération Nationale de Libre Pensée et d'Action Sociale*. He eventually abandoned anarchist propaganda to write almost exclusively on free thought and anticlericalism. He was a supporter of the Russian Revolution. He wrote nine entries in Faure's *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁴ Mauricius (Maurice Vandamme) was born in Paris and grew up in Montmartre in a middle-class family. In 1904 he started studying medicine and took an interest in psychology, biology, anthropology, and many other emerging disciplines. After meeting Libertad and Armand in 1905, he began participating in the *causeries populaires* and became one of the principal contributors to *l'anarchie*, which he directed with his partner Rirette Maîtrejean in 1909 and with Lorulot in 1913–1914. He was more of an intellectual than a militant. He was a member of the group *L'Idée Libre* founded in 1911 by Lorulot.

²⁵ Kibaltchiche was born in Brussels. His parents were exiled Russian revolutionaries. His father was suspected of having murdered the Tsar

II- Developments in Philosophical Anarchism

i. Postanarchism

Postanarchism arose as a re-evaluation of “classical anarchism”. The prefix “post” suggests that classical anarchism has become moribund or obsolete.¹ In other words, according to early postanarchists, there is a rupture between the anarchism of the past and that of the present. The common chronology of anarchism divides the movement into three main waves. The first spans from the birth of the movement in the second half of the nineteenth century to the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 (classical/historical/orthodox anarchism). The second coincides with the rise of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s (sometimes called “new anarchism”),² and the third emerges with the alter-globalization movements of the late 1990s and early 2000s (sometimes called “neo-anarchism” or, equivocally, also “new anarchism”). Postanarchists seek to renew classical anarchism by developing a philosophical articulation of neo-anarchism. They claim to reconfigure the theoretical discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in light of post-structuralism and postmodernism.

¹ For further discussion as to what the prefix “post” means in postanarchism, see B. Franks, *Postanarchism: A critical assessment*, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 12, n. 2, 2007, pp. 131–2.

² E.g. A. Cornel, *A new anarchism emerges, 1940–1954*, *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 5, n. 1, 2011; B. J. Pauli, *The New Anarchism in Britain and the US*, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 20, n. 2, 2015.

The term postanarchism was coined by the anarchistic author Hakim Bey in 1987 in his essay *PostAnarchism Anarchy*. Bey's main contention is that ideological disputes within the libertarian movement obscure anarchist prefiguration. According to Bey, one should ask oneself, here and now: 'What are my true desires?'. Political philosopher Todd May was amongst the first scholars to formulate a theory of postanarchism in the mid-1990s.³ His *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (1994) is one of the pioneering attempts to politicize poststructuralism through anarchism. Saul Newman, who popularized postanarchism in the early 2000s, took a different approach. He deploys poststructuralism to put forth a new anarchist theory intended to address contemporary political problems. Newman has been the central and most vocal proponent of postanarchism in the past two decades. It is primarily through his work that the tradition will be discussed.

Postanarchists' philosophical evaluation of classical anarchism is chiefly based on three key concepts: subjectivity, power, and reason.⁴ It may be summarized as follows: for classical anarchists, the human subject is essentially good and originally untainted by power.⁵ The state of nature is one of harmony.⁶ Power is the restriction of freedom. Power is exercised from the top down, engendered by and concentrated in institutions such as the state or the Church, which should be destroyed.⁷ The goal of anarchism is to liberate the human subject from the shackles of power so that they may live and flourish in accord with natural laws, which are revealed

³ See also A. M. Koch, Poststructuralism and the Epistemological Basis of Anarchism, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 23, n. 3, 1993.

⁴ García 2007, pp. 43–59.

⁵ S. Newman 2015, *Postanarchism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2015, pp. 5, 41, 51, 62, 91, 127. T. May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994, p. 63.

⁶ Newman 2015, p. 43.

⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 25–6.

propaganda by the deed and individual autonomy.¹⁹ However, individualists ceased to believe in the revolutionary potential of the masses. Instead, they placed their hopes in individual acts of revolt: 'Les plus belles pages de l'histoire révolutionnaire n'ont été inspirées que par l'acte individuel ; il n'y a rien à attendre des foules'.²⁰

The joining of syndicates by most anarchists represented an unacceptable compromise for individualists. To them, it meant no less than the betrayal of the anarchist cause in favour of socialist reformism. Individualism became the rallying point for those who rejected trade-unionist choices. Communist tendencies within mainstream anarchism promoted by Jean Grave and Sébastien Faure in newspapers such as *Le Libéraire* and *Les Temps nouveaux* were condemned in various individualist periodicals, in particular *L'Esprit d'initiative* (1895), *Le Riflard* (1895–1897) (later known as *L'Action*), and *La Renaissance* (1895–1896).²¹ Dissidents such

¹⁹ Mauricius, *Le rôle social des anarchistes*, Paris, 1911, p. 11.

²⁰ In 1892 a police informer reported: 'une séparation en deux fractions de messieurs les anarchistes. D'un côté les modérés (ouvriers, travailleurs), de l'autre, les violents c'est-à-dire ceux qui ne font rien'. Archives de la Préfecture de police BA 77, 30 septembre 1892

²¹ Dupont, the founder of La renaissance, stated: 'aux égoïsmes solidarisés de la première heure succède l'individualisme le plus absolu'. *La renaissance*, n. 66, 5 avril 1886. Critiques of syndicalism were also found in *Le réveil de l'escalve*, *l'anarchie*, and *La vie anarchiste*.

sassinations. These attacks, whose significance was vastly overplayed in the press and in literary works, only caused nine deaths. Nonetheless, they led to the construction of the now hackneyed mythological figure of the anarchist as a terrorist. Whilst most mainstream libertarians denounced these acts of violence, they were largely condoned by individualists as well as by a number of artists infatuated with anarchism. Harsh repression ensued: a series of laws – *les lois scélérates* – were passed between 1892 and 1893 restricting freedom of the press, which brought almost all anarchist propaganda to a halt.

It is from 1895 that individualism can begin to be identified as a distinct current on the margins of the mainstream libertarian movement, which came to embrace syndicalism. The last five years of the nineteenth century marked the emergence of anarcho-syndicalism led by Ferdinand Pelloutier and Émile Pouget.¹⁷ No longer believing that diffuse acts of violence could trigger mass insurrection, the majority of anarchists began to advocate collective action and sought to entice the working classes to join syndicates.¹⁸ Focusing on the economic emancipation of the proletariat, they held that syndicates and trade unions enabled workers to organize themselves independently, away from party politics. They were meant to improve workers' present lives as well as constituting the foundations of a new, stateless social order. Anarcho-syndicalists' chief modes of collective action were boycott and sabotage in hopes of eventually bringing about the general strike – the ultimate weapon against capitalist society. Syndicalism quickly became French anarchists' dominant strategy.

The movement's socialist tendencies became the new orthodoxy. In opposition, a fringe group stood firm in its support of

¹⁷ The first congress of the *Fédération des bourses du travail* was held in St Étienne in 1892. Strictly speaking, French anarcho-syndicalism was founded in Amiens in 1906.

¹⁸ See Maitron 1975, pp. 265–330.

though scientific investigation. Scientific and social progress thus go hand in hand. On this view, classical anarchism is the endpoint of humanism and Enlightenment thought.⁸

By contrast, following Foucault, postanarchists view society as a network of ubiquitous power relations.⁹ Power is not necessarily repressive or pernicious in and of itself. In fact, there could be no society without power relations. Power is a rhizomatic network of unequal and unstable force relations inherent to and immanent in any social interaction. Simply put, a force is any factor that affects or influences a relation by moving one to act or react in a certain way. On this account, power is not something to be abolished, something that we can possess, or something from which we can free ourselves.¹⁰ Rather, power is all-pervasive and inescapable; we all constantly and alternately exercise it and submit to it. The power struggle at the heart of society is ongoing, inevitable, and amoral. Second, postanarchists argue that the subject is the product of fluid, contingent, and ongoing socio-historical processes. There is no ahistorical human essence to be liberated, for the individual does not have a nature that precedes power. Quite the reverse, the individual is partly produced by power: it is the 'historical correlative' of technologies of power.¹¹ The subject is a culturally, geographically, and historically located ongoing social construction. Third, rational thought is neither objective nor universal, but also produced and shaped by power dynamics. Science is not necessarily a vector of progress. One simply needs to note, as Lyotard did, that despite its unprecedented

⁸ T. Swann, Are Postanarchists right to Call Classical Anarchists Humanist?, B. Franks & M. Wilson (eds.), *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.

⁹ Newman 2015, pp. 2, 78.

¹⁰ M. Foucault, *L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté*, *Dits et Écrits*, vol. II, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, p. 1546.

¹¹ M. Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 27.

scientific advances, the twentieth century witnessed some of the most horrendous tragedies of our civilization.

To sum up, postanarchists reject classical anarchists' alleged belief in humanism, teleology, and in the abolishment of centralized juridico-sovereign power. Instead of these outdated views, they believe in fluid subjectivity and rationality unavoidably entangled in and partly produced by networks of power. The philosophical paradigm shift from classical anarchism to postanarchism appears to essentially parallel the divide between modern and postmodern thought.¹²

Postanarchism has undergone heavy criticism by French- and English-speaking scholars alike.¹³ It has been attacked

¹² It is worth noting that postanarchists are not the only ones who posit such a clash. For example, French sociologist and anarchist scholar Irène Pereira describes the divide in terms of practice: 'L'enjeu du débat entre modernité et postmodernité du point de vue des pratiques apparaît donc comme le suivant : les pratiques anarchistes ne doivent-elle tendre qu'à mettre en place des espaces éphémères où s'expérimentent de nouveaux modes de vie (position défendue dans les milieux autonomes) ou doivent-elle tendre à participer à des actions de masse ayant pour but le politique et économique de la société dans son ensemble (position défendue dans les milieux syndicalistes révolutionnaires) ?' See I. Pereira, Table ronde autour de l'anarchisme, *Réfractations*, vol. 20, 2008, p. 108.

¹³ J. Cohn, What is Postanarchism "Post"?, *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 13, n. 1, 2002; J. Cohn & S. Wilbur, What's wrong with postanarchism?, *The Institute for Anarchist Studies*, 2003; B. Franks, Postanarchism: A critical assessment, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2007; V. Garcia, *L'anarchisme aujourd'hui*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007; N. J. Jun, Deleuze, Derrida, and anarchism, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2007; D. Colson, L'anarchisme, Foucault, et les « postmodernes », *Réfractations*, vol. 20, 2008; E. Colombo, L'anarchisme et la querelle de la postmodernité, *Réfractations*, vol. 20, 2008; T. Ibañez, Points de vue sur l'anarchisme, *Réfractations*, vol. 20, 2008; T. Swann, Are Postanarchists Right to Call Classical Anarchists Humanists?, B. Franks & M. Wilson (eds.), *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; B. Franks, The Politics of Postanarchism, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 19, n. 1, 2011; R. Garcia, Nature humaine et anarchie, PhD Thesis, ENS Lyon, 2012; S. Newman & D. Rouselle, Postanarchism and its Critics, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 21, n. 2, 2013; T. Ibañez, *Anarchisme en mouvement, Anarchisme, Néoanarchisme et Postanarchisme*, Paris, nana éditions, 2014; R.

declared: 'Vols, assassinats, incendies et explosions, voilà les seuls moyens qu'il faut employer contre la bourgeoisie si on veut en arriver au triomphe de la révolution'.¹⁴ Illegalism and violent acts of revolt were two of the main anarchist tactics in the late nineteenth century. Individualism was yet to be clearly demarcated from the rest of the anarchist movement. Its proponents were very few and their influence was marginal and diffuse throughout the 1880s. It was an individualism of action that had no firm intellectual basis and lacked explicit adherents. The first generation of individualists were by and large illegalists and insurrectionists.¹⁵

Propaganda by the deed, that is, any action intended as a catalyst for mass insurrection, was the watchword of virtually all early anarchists. Acts of propaganda by the deed could be violent or nonviolent. The goal, however, was always the same: to entice the masses into insurrection. In practice, anarchists wanted to trigger social unrest that was to lead to a riot. For example, they crashed bourgeois balls at the Hôtel de Ville, printed fake leaflets offering jobs to workers of all trades, and organized public assemblies of the unemployed at the Esplanade.¹⁶ These actions were intended to show the exploited masses the necessity of revolt and the possibility of social emancipation. Propaganda was successful insofar as it made people better aware of the all-pervading nature of oppression and prompted them to take action. Early individualists were agitators: they wished to raise awareness, to set an example, and to show the way forward.

Anarchism, particularly its individualist branch, underwent a crisis during the early 1890s following a rash of *attentats*, which consisted primarily of bombings and as-

¹⁴ E. Renard, Rapport Finot, Prefecture de police, BA 1239. Cited in Manfredonia (1984, p. 186).

¹⁵ See, for example, P. Kropotkin, Les révoltes populaires, *Le révolté*, n. 22, 18 février-14 mars 1886.

¹⁶ Manfredonia 1984, pp. 64-5.

only the latter is rationally justified and hence compatible with anarchism. Simply put, good social organization is to be based upon scientific knowledge. Although scientism and positivism had a widespread and enduring influence upon French individualism, they were ideological trends that primarily reflected a belief in and commitment to rational investigation.¹⁰

Early French anarchists of almost all persuasions vehemently believed in the imminent fall of capitalism and in the constructive potential of revolution.¹¹ Galvanized by the mythic Parisian atmosphere of revolt they had created, libertarians had a strong sense of historical continuity: they saw themselves as pursuing and building upon the revolutions of 1789, 1793, 1848, and 1871.¹² They frequently referred to the French Revolution of 1789 using some of its language and symbols. Early anarchists had a romanticized, not to say quixotic, view of revolution as the one and only means of destroying oppression and inequality, thereby opening the way for a future utopia. They regarded it as an essential and central stage in the struggle to end all centralized authority. Convinced that revolution was at hand, anarchists did everything they could to prompt its occurrence. All means were legitimate to bring it about, be they swindles, assassinations, or bombings. ‘Nous rêvions’, wrote the anarchist frontman Jean Grave, ‘bombes, attentats, actes éclatants, capables de saper la société bourgeoise’.¹³ In a similar vein, the individualist Eugène Renard

¹⁰ Manfredonia (1984, p. 337) suggests that this commitment to establishing a ‘rational’ anarchism was what prevented the French movement from falling prey to anti-social deviations as it was the case in Italy and Germany. See also Lorulot, Sur la science, *L’anarchie*, n. 288, 13 octobre 1911; Delvaldès wrote, *L’Idée Libre*, n. 9, août 1912. For further discussion, see Dhavernas 1981, pp. 78–93.

¹¹ Maitron 1975, p. 152. Note that this is a generalization. The group of *L’autonomie individuelle* did not believe that a new social order could spring from a violent uprising.

¹² Varias 1997, pp. 41–77.

¹³ Grave 1973, p. 167.

mainly on philosophical grounds.¹⁴ As Villion, García, Franks, and others have shown, when it is not altogether flawed, the postanarchist survey of classical anarchism is hasty, naïve, and simplistic. Postanarchists draw their understanding of anarchism from a handful of arbitrarily chosen texts and scattered quotations that do not accurately capture the thought of the authors who are meant to represent classical anarchism.¹⁵ Their threefold critique of classical libertarian concepts does not stand philosophical scrutiny as anarchism was never as epistemologically and metaphysically rigid and simplistic as postanarchists claim. Critics have rightly pointed out that classical anarchists put forth much more nuanced and sophisticated theories than postanarchists suggest. Indeed, classical anarchists were already in many ways anti-modernists and well-aware of disciplinary and biopolitical forms of power.¹⁶ The anarchist subject has always been heterogeneous and ever-changing,¹⁷ and authors such as Proudhon and Bakunin viewed progress as an evolutionary process.¹⁸ To its critics, postanarchism is a travesty of anarchism, modernity, and even poststructuralism. As Jesse Cohn and Shawn Wilbur argued in the early days of postanarchism:

Kinna, Postanarchism, Saul Newman, *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 16, n. 2, 2016; R. Kinna, From New Anarchism to Post-anarchism, *Kropotkin*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017; J. A. Pedroso, Mikhail Bakunin’s True-Seeking, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 27, n. 1, 2019.

¹⁴ V. García, *L’anarchisme aujourd’hui*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2007.

¹⁵ E.g. G. P. Maximoff (ed.), *Political Philosophy of Mikhail Bakunin*, Glencoe, IL, The Free Press, 1953; S. Edwards (ed.), *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, London, Macmillan, 1970.

¹⁶ S. E. Türkeli, Nietzsche, Post-anarchism and the Senses, *Siyahi*, 2006.

¹⁷ D. Colson, Subjectivités anarchistes et subjectivités modernes, A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire*, Lyon, Atelier de Création Libertaire, 1997; García 2007, pp. 133–48.

¹⁸ P.-J. Proudhon, *Philosophie du Progrès*, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1946 [1853].

Having constructed, on such an impoverished basis, an ideological ghost called “classical anarchism”, postanarchists then subject this phantom entity to a critique based on some drastically undertheorized concepts, tending to proceed as if the meaning of key terms like “nature”, “power”, and even “poststructuralism” were both self-evident and unchanging.¹⁹

There are several lacunae in the analysis of the postanarchist enterprise. These are by and large due to the fact that critics of postanarchism are mostly academic philosophers who have debunked their arguments from a philosophical perspective. Debates often revolve around concepts such as the critique of power, subjectivity, and rationality sketched out above. They rarely include analyses of anarchist practices and how they evolved overtime.²⁰ I believe that critics have failed to note that postanarchists’ partial account of anarchism is also due to their general approach to the history of the libertarian movement. Postanarchists do not merely misread anarchist thinkers and belie anarchist theories, they also misread history. It is not solely their assessment of anarchist thinkers that is flawed, but their entire approach to the history of the movement. As we shall see, their conceptual misinterpretation of the libertarian subject parallels their misunderstanding of anarchism itself. Just like the libertarian subject, anarchism is historically and culturally located, dynamic, and endlessly mutable. A critical overview of anarchist historiography needs to be provided so as to better assess postanarchists’ treatment of classical anarchism.

¹⁹ J. Cohn & S. Wilbur 2003, p. 4.

²⁰ García, for instance, devotes one page to practices of transformation of daily life and three pages to libertarian colonies. García 2007, pp. 217–9.

were in their twenties or early thirties, but many were even younger when they emigrated to the French capital.

From the outset, it was the individualist press that brought advocates and sympathizers to the cause together. The first individualist newspaper, *L’individu libre*, was founded in December 1882, but its existence was short-lived and its impact was negligible.⁵ The second individualist journal, *L’autonomie individuelle*, founded in 1887, was more influential; it constituted the first attempt at a theoretical foundation for individualism.⁶ As all individualist publications to come, it was eclectic and open-ended; it sought to debunk prejudices and to challenge received wisdom. Its editors and contributors took a scientific approach seeking to address social problems with scientific solutions. They believed that the sciences supported the view that egoism was the ultimate drive of human action. As a result, they considered individualism to be the final stage of social progress.⁷ Paraf-Javal⁸ is a good illustration of the scientific tendencies found in early individualism.⁹ He believed that there were only two methods to address social problems: authoritarian and scientific. The first is based on a priori judgment and the second is based on empirical observation. On his view,

ment. *Gli Intransigenti* harshly criticized the rest of the anarchist movement for being infested by bourgeois figureheads. They published a single issue of the journal *Il Ciclone* on 4 September 1887. Cf. Manfredonia 1984, pp. 123–7.

⁵ Cf. Grave 1973, p. 383.

⁶ Nine issues of *L’autonomie individuelle* were published from May 1887 to March 1888. See also the eight issues of *L’Avant-Garde cosmopolite* published in 1887. Although not explicitly individualist, the journal defended egoism.

⁷ *L’autonomie individuelle*, n. 6, 1 novembre 1887.

⁸ Paraf-Javal was born in Paris in a family of Alsatian Jews. He viewed himself as a great scientist and logician. He was the strongest promoter of scientism amongst anarchists. As a keen hygienist, he denounced the use of tobacco, alcohol and other intoxicants. He was for a time a close friend of Libertad with whom he founded the first *causerie populaire* in 1902.

⁹ Paraf-Javal, *Disqualification de la presque totalité des individus et des groupes à l’étude de la question sociale*.

1880s. Anarchism was comprised of two main moral and political inclinations: one based on collective action that grounded itself in the socio-economic class struggle and one based on the individual that adamantly rejected all restrictions to freedom and stressed autonomy as the ultimate aim. As historian Richard Sonn puts it: 'French anarchism was a dialectical movement caught in a balancing act between the claims of the individual and the collectivity'.² Far from being a clear-cut divide, these communist and individualist tendencies often overlapped with each other. This nascent individualist sentiment began to take hold in the late 1880s and early 1890s as the anarchist movement crystallized.³ Individualism within anarchism remained an open-ended tendency until the turn of the century.

Individualists came from various social backgrounds. It is important to point out that individualism was not an exclusively working-class movement. In fact, those who joined its ranks were rarely factory workers; most were marginalized artisans (e.g. cobblers, carpenters, and printers) whose jobs were threatened by industrialization and technological advances. They saw their specialized skills and knowledge gradually falling into obsolescence yet refused to become wage earners and factory workers. Many were *déclassé.e.s*, neither bourgeois nor workers, such as demoted artists and writers of middle- and upper-class origins. Others came from working class and peasant families. Individualists converged in Paris from all around France as well as other countries such as Belgium, Switzerland, Italy,⁴ and various parts of Eastern Europe. Most

² Sonn 1989, p. 33.

³ Fabbri 1951, p. 177. The first initiative to organise the anarchist movement was in 1889 when Malatesta proposed to create an international anarchist party united around a flag and a common cause. See E. Malatesta, *L'Associazione*, n. 1, septembre 1889.

⁴ In 1887 a group of Italian refugees in France founded a group called *Gli Intransigenti*, which was close to the insurrectionist branch of the move-

ii. A Critique of Anarchist Historiography

There is a presupposed hierarchy of theory over practice in the vast majority of historical studies of anarchism. In what follows, I contend that typologies of anarchism based solely upon doctrines, theories, or ideas provide an incomplete account of the libertarian movement.²¹ Traditional historical analyses of anarchism overstate the importance of theory in a movement that was primarily about action. Laying greater emphasis on praxis, as opposed to doxa, may be a more promising investigatory orientation. Thus, instead of classifying schools of anarchism based upon ideas, one should take a closer look at militants' diverse strategies for social change. This will reveal the importance of themes such as art, education, or ecology, which have largely been eclipsed by mainstream anarchist historiography.

There are two main ways in which scholars have attempted to write a history of anarchism.²² Both are primarily based on ideas; they are historical accounts of anarchism *qua* political ideology.²³ The first consists of constructing a theoretical canon. That is, it selects the allegedly leading theoreticians of the movement (most often Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin) and analyses their arguments on the organization of society (especially questions pertaining to the state, the law, and property).²⁴ A typical canonical history of anarchism may begin in

²¹ Manfredonia 2007, p. 16.

²² E.g. G. Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986 [1962]; A. Ritter, *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis*, 1980; D. Morland, *Demanding the Impossible?*, London, Cassell, 1997.

²³ D. Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism*, London, Routledge, 1989.

²⁴ There has never been a consensus as to who those doctrinal figureheads are. Although Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin are almost always cited, the selection of other figures is the result of the author's (rarely justified) preference. What legitimizes the selection of Godwin, Tolstoy, Stirner, whose respective ideas differ enormously and who never self-identified as an-

the following way: “In the mid-nineteenth century Proudhon inaugurated libertarian thought by rejecting the authority of the capitalist state and of the Church. He promoted mutualism – a system of common ownership of the means of production in the form of cooperatives and self-employed individuals operating within a market economy”.²⁵ Canonical accounts of anarchism can be traced back as early as 1900 in the work of the German law scholar Paul Eltzbacher. Eltzbacher was among the first to present anarchism as a cogent political ideology in his thesis and seminal book *Der Anarchismus*, which had a momentous influence upon future historians.²⁶ In more recent times, George Woodcock was most instrumental in constituting a theoretical canon and depicting the anarchist enterprise as the application of ideas.²⁷ His 1962 *Anarchism, A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* is widely considered a refer-

archists as members of the canon? Why are Charles Fourier, Élisée Reclus, or Emma Goldman almost never mentioned as leading theoreticians of the movement?

²⁵ P.-J. Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques, ou, Philosophie de la misère*, Paris, M. Rivière, 1923 [1846], p. 174. Some historians date back the foundation of anarchist political theory to William Godwin’s 1793 *An Enquiry concerning political justice, and its influence on general virtue and happiness*. Cf. A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire*, Lyon, Atelier de creation libertaire, 1997, p. 5.

²⁶ The English rendering of the book title clearly illustrates the canonical approach taken: P. Eltzbacher, *The Great Anarchists: Ideas and Teachings of Seven Major Thinkers*, trans. S. T. Byington, New York, Dover, 2004 [1900, trans. 1908].

²⁷ Note that Woodcock was not so much as man of action as a man of letters; his engagement with anarchism was primarily intellectual. This is reflected in his historical account of the movement, which largely underplays militant aspects of anarchism and is influenced by his pacifist agenda. For example, Bakunin is described as ‘gigantic’, ‘unkempt’, with ‘enormous appetites’ and a ‘destructive urge’. His Weltanschauung is described as ‘pan-destructionism’. Woodcock 1986, pp. 134, 208. Exaggerated portrayals of Bakunin are not unique to Woodcock. E.g. R. Carr, *Anarchism in France*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1977. For a critique of Woodcock, see N. Walter, Woodcock Reconsidered, *The Raven*, vol. 1, n. 2, 1987. See also S. E. Türkeli, What is Anarchism? A Reflection on the Canon and the Con-

II- A Brief History of Individualist Anarchism in France

Lorsque je rencontre certains individualistes, je sens que ce sont des gens ... qui se distinguent par leur genre de vie du reste de l’humanité.

Sophie Zaïkowska

*Si je lutte pour les autres, c’est aussi pour moi, car si je suis entourée d’individus conscients et raisonnables, nous pourrions nous passer d’autorité. Pour cela il n’est pas besoin d’une révolution, ce sera le résultat de l’attitude des anarchistes, découlant d’une morale de réciprocité et d’entraide. On peut, dès maintenant être soit, non pas en marchant sur les autres, mais en recherchant un bonheur et une harmonie avec celui des autres.*¹

Henriette Rousset

i. The First Wave of Individualism (1880–1900)

Individualist sensibilities were present within the French anarchist movement from its very beginnings in the early

¹ H. Rousset, *La Vie Anarchiste*, 15 juin 1912.

incoherent epiphenomenon of anarchism unworthy of scholarly analysis. As the historian Céline Beaudet writes at the end of her 2006 book on libertarian colonies:⁴¹

Dissidents parmi les dissidents, « anarchie dans l'anarchisme », les individualistes ... sont rarement considérés pour eux-mêmes, soit remisés dans les placards de l'Histoire, soit décrits à l'aune de leurs détracteurs : bourgeois ou mouchard pour les anarchistes « orthodoxes », bandit ou criminel pour les bourgeois, « dispersion des tendances » ou révolte « irresponsable » chez les historiens.⁴²

There is no single individualist school based upon a central doctrine. It would thus be pointless to seek to establish some kind of political unity between the manifold manifestations of the tradition. Rather, individualism – like the rest of the libertarian movement – should be seen as consisting of eclectic and sometimes disparate ramifications linked together by family resemblances. Individualists were marginal figures within an already marginal political movement. Challenging mainstream anarchists and eluding categorization, they were extreme mavericks amongst radical nonconformists. Who were French individualist anarchists? What ideas and practices did they advocate? Far from being a negligible offshoot of the libertarian movement, we shall see that individualism is a rich and vibrant political tradition that offers alternative visions of personal emancipation and social struggle.

⁴¹ Beaudet 2006, pp. 187–215.

⁴² Ibid, p. 188.

ence work by both scholars and activists worldwide.²⁸ Canonical accounts of anarchism predominate in anarchist historiography.

The second way in which historians have studied the movement is by focusing upon the dominant manifestation(s) of anarchism (often closely associated with the workers' movement). It consists of selecting a cluster of ideas that are supposed to represent the ideological core of the movement and in grouping theoreticians into ideological categories. This often leads scholars to disregard or hastily amalgamate minority branches of the movement or strands of anarchism that focus more upon praxis. The most common categorization is tripartite, namely syndicalist, communist, and individualist. Other ideological groupings include mutualism, anarcho-pacifism, and more recently anarcho-primitivism, anarcho-feminism, green anarchism, queer anarchism, and even anarchotranshumanism. This approach overstates the divergences between different factions of anarchism and makes the movement appear overly disparate. When one looks at anarchist practices, one quickly realizes that doctrinal differences do not preclude joint action. For example, it is easy to see that the tripartite typology (communist, syndicalist, and individualist) does not do justice to the reality of anarchist practices. Most individualists worked towards the establishment of a communist society whilst some so-called communists took part in illegal acts alongside individualists. The general strike – the syndicalist mode of action par excellence – was advocated by many communists and individualists

structive Potential of its Destruction, PhD Thesis, Loughborough University, 2012, pp. 40–69.

²⁸ W. H. New, *A Political Act, Essays and Images in Honour of George Woodcock*, Vancouver, The University of British Columbia Press, 1978, p. 278; Walter, 1987, p. 174; C. Ward, *Anarchism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004; M. Shatz, *Anarchism, The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

alike. Ideological categorizations of anarchism are limited insofar as they underplay the importance of collective modes of action.

It should now be clear that anarchist scholarship has not been immune to the development of history as a discipline based upon the actions of a select group of so-called great men with great ideas. Both aforementioned approaches fall short as they produce reductive and biased interpretations of the libertarian movement. They illegitimately depict anarchism as a linear, static, and monolithic tradition (not to say doctrine).²⁹ Anarchism is all too often reduced to an anti-statist ideology insofar as the only common denominator between theoreticians appears to be their rejection of the state.³⁰ In truth, the state is merely one form of illegitimate authority. Anarchism is necessarily pananarchistic for hierarchy and domination stray beyond the scope of the state.³¹

Anarchism is also commonly reduced to its insurrectionary manifestation, which leads one to view the tradition as a violent and failed enterprise, if not simply wanton terrorism.³² The

²⁹ Note that some of the historians who study individualism make the same mistake. They tend to reduce the tradition to what I am calling its “egoistic” and/or “constructivist” manifestations at the of this chapter. E.g. A. Steiner, *De l’émancipation des femmes dans les milieux individualistes à la Belle Époque*, *Réfractations*, 24, 2010, p. 21.

³⁰ This was a way to distinguish anarchism from state socialism and social democrats, especially during the Cold War. P. Eltzbachers, *The Great Anarchists*, trans. S. T. Byington, New York, Dover, 2004 [1900, trans. 1908], pp. 276, 292; G. Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 [1962], p. 11. The reduction of anarchism to anti-statism is even more blatant in the work of political scientists. For example, see A. Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, London, Macmillan Press, 1992, p. 196; I. Adams, *Political Ideology Today*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 148. Note also that this is what leads some right-wing libertarians to identify as anarcho-capitalists.

³¹ Cf. *Pananarchist Manifesto*, Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups, 1918.

³² J. Joll, *The Anarchists*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964; P. Feyerabend, *Against Method*, London, Verson, 1975. This critique is often fallacious

autre sens, l’individualisme est le bourgeoisisme poussé à l’extrême, et entre les deux extrêmes, il y a toutes les graduations et tous les mélanges possibles.³⁸

Some supporters of individualism were eccentrics that were a long way from the libertarian movement and its central goal of social emancipation or its vision of a classless and stateless society. In fact, some of these mavericks lacked any revolutionary drive other than wanton terrorism. As Malatesta wrote:

L’individualisme anarchiste a eu le malheur d’être souvent affirmé par des personnes auxquelles manquait tout sentiment anarchiste, des lettrés bourgeois ..., des demis lettrés, des demi illettrés, des loufoques dont la lecture de livres obscurs avait fini par bouleverser le cerveau, et enfin les pires de tous, les malfaiteurs.³⁹

Detractors of individualism were quick to denigrate the tradition by reducing its advocates to mere thugs and vandals: ‘parlant des individualistes cela revient à parler des mouchards, des cambrieurs aussi. À quoi donner la priorité ? Je suis embarrassé car les trois catégories sont étroitement entremêlées’.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is clear that the sheer diversity of references, outlooks, and practices found within individualism made it appear inchoate and hence constituted a deterrent to its examination.

In summary, individualist anarchism is a little-known, controversial, and heterogenous movement. Often considered insignificant, implicit, or heretical, it is generally regarded as an

³⁸ L. Fabbri, *Malatesta*, Montevideo, 1951, p. 171.

³⁹ E. Malatesta, *La pensée de Malatesta*, Paris, 1979, p. 126.

⁴⁰ J. Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande anarchiste*, Paris, Flammarion, 1973, p. 400.

The internal diversity of individualism was undoubtedly another factor that contributed to its sinking into obscurity. What Maitron writes about the daunting eclecticism of anarchism is all the more applicable to individualism: 'Chaque anarchiste voulant ... apporter sa pierre à l'édifice, la bibliographie de l'anarchie est d'une ampleur et d'une variété déconcertante'.³⁷ Individualists have always rejected all fixed ideologies and dogmas. The socio-political concerns and aspirations that bred individualist sentiment were multifarious and changed over time. Individualists drew upon numerous ideological sources, ranging from Bentham to Nietzsche, including Spencer, Bergson, and Palante, oftentimes selecting specific passages that were aligned with their views. For example, they looked up to Rousseau for denouncing the myriad ways in which society restricted one's freedom, but rejected his concept of the social contract and the general will that underpins it. Consequently, the organization of society that individualists envisioned differed greatly, sometimes to the point of being antithetical: whilst some advocated communism and violent action, others defended private property and pacifism.

Finally, it is no simple task to determine which individuals may legitimately be considered individualist anarchists. Indeed, individualists drew from and sometimes espoused essentially all manifestations of individualism of the Belle Époque. Some promoted individualist ideas yet did not subscribe to that epithet. Even those who self-identified as such could not agree upon a single definition of individualism. As Malatesta noted:

On donne à ce mot [individualisme] tant de significations diverses qu'à chaque fois qu'on le prononce, il faudrait toujours ajouter un chapitre d'explications. Dans un certain sens, nous sommes tous individualistes ... et, dans un

³⁷ Maitron 1975, p. 21.

former critique wrongly assumes that successful insurrection means seizing power, whilst the latter eclipses activists' political motives. In any case, insurrectionism is just one expression of anarchism – one mode of action amongst many others. Traditional ideological accounts of anarchism are historically, philosophically, and sociologically inadequate. In fact, by treating anarchism as a decontextualized political theory or as a set of universal precepts, scholars end up caricaturing and dehistoricizing the movement.³³

One of the most significant problems with ideological studies of anarchism is that it makes little sense to try to categorize an anti-dogmatic, anti-authoritarian, and anti-representative movement based upon a set of doctrines put forth by a clique of key thinkers. It is ill-advised, not to say ludicrous, to seek to homogenize the internal diversity of a tradition that has as its core the promotion of plurality and the rejection of all dogma. Anarchism is, by definition, ideologically eclectic and historically fluid; it was never a set of fixed ideas put forth by a handful of great minds.³⁴ Traditional accounts of anarchism pay no heed to these basic anarchist principles.

Ideological accounts of the libertarian movement are also sociologically inaccurate insofar as they ignore the inner workings of the anarchist tradition. They do not properly consider the dialectical relationship between theory and practice in anarchism. Practice is not necessarily grounded in theory as scholars sometimes seem to assume. Revolt and social change do not necessarily require sophisticated ideas.

for it presupposes that a successful revolutionary movement is one that manages to seize power, whilst anarchism seeks to eradicate or transform power relations. Adams 1993, pp. 164–6; A. Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2009, p. 117.

³³ See Q. Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas, History and Theory*, vol. 8, n. 1, 1969.

³⁴ This is arguably also true of other socio-political movements. For a critique of ideological history, see J. Dunn, *Political Obligation in Its Historical Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

One should remember that anarchism is first and foremost an ethos, an opened vision, or an experimental way of life before it becomes a matter of theoretical examination. Even those who undertook conceptual analyses of the tradition constantly remind us that theory is useful only inasmuch as it can be translated into and shaped by practice. Deeds, as a matter of fact, often take precedence over words: ‘l’idée naît de l’action et doit retourner à l’action’.³⁵ For anarchists, principles and forms are coterminous; the militant and the theoretician, the activist and the thinker should be one and the same.³⁶ Anarchist texts are not abstract musings so much as zealous propaganda. Anarchism is not, and never was, a mere political ideology, let alone a philosophical system, but is first and foremost a living, ever-changing movement.

Doctrinal accounts of anarchism do not grasp the crucial importance of prefiguration, that is, attempts to live out anarchy in the present. For the anarchist, ends should be immanent within means. Most historians adopt a narrow view of what a political movement can be. A political movement is not merely the manifestation of a system of political philosophy. A more objective representation of anarchist history requires a significant expansion of our conception of the political realm. Anarchism encompasses a broader culture of revolt and of creating contexts-specific, everchanging spaces of resistance. As the historian Richard Sonn argues, it ‘cannot be understood on solely political terms, but must be interpreted

³⁵ P.-J. Proudhon, *De la capacité des classes ouvrières*, Paris, Éditions du Monde Libertaire, 1977 [1865], p. 54. See Proudhon’s distinction between ‘idéomanie’ and ‘idéofortie’. See also A. Dabin, Proudhon : une philosophie prospective et pragmatique, *Dissidences*, vol. 5, 2013.

³⁶ P. Kropotkine, *Paroles d’un révolté*, Antony, Éditions TOPS/H, 2002 [1885], p. 219. For a recent sociological account of how French anarchists marry theory and practice, and how they seek to live out anarchism in their daily lives, see M. Pucciarelli, *L’imaginaire des libertaires aujourd’hui*, Lyon, Atelier de creation libertaire, 2000, pp. 221–30.

When discussed by other anarchists, individualism was usually treated with great hostility.³² Lambasted as a distortion of the anarchist enterprise and its revolutionary aspirations, it was often dismissed as the pernicious product of bourgeois influences.³³ For example, the libertarian socialist Francesco Merlino claimed that ‘trop de philosophie individualiste nous conduirait à embrasser le bourgeois ... à force de philosopher sur l’égoïsme, on devient égoïste’.³⁴ The prominent anarcho-syndicalist Jean Grave spoke disparagingly of the ‘outrecuidance de quelques hurluberlus – qui se croient anarchistes parce qu’ils peuvent plus ou moins mal réciter quelques passages de Nietzsche ou de Stirner’.³⁵ As we shall see, attacks of this kind were rife during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Such condemnations gradually escalated into ostracization and eventually led to official repudiation. Until the First World War the relationship between individualists and other anarchists was marked by ongoing tension and conflict. Individualists were anarchist critics and dissenters to the point of being treated as heretics. They brought anarchy within anarchism.³⁶

³² For example, see J. Grave, *Le syndicalisme dans l’évolution sociale*, Paris, 1908 ; E. Malatesta, *L’amoralisme individualiste et l’anarchie*, Flemalle-Grande, Éd. de l’Emancipateur, 1924; M. Pierrot, *Sur l’individualisme*, Paris, Temps nouveaux, 1911.

³³ ‘Les anarchistes « anti-individualistes » prétendent que les individualistes sont des bourgeois anti-révolutionnaires’. Hervieux, *Les Anti-Individualistes*, *L’anarchie*, n. 258, 17 March 1910. Cf. Merlino, *Necessità e basi d’una intesa*, Turin, 1980 [1892], p. 11; S. Merlino, *L’individualisme dans l’anarchisme*, Paris, Varlin, 1981. For a more recent critique of this kind, see M. Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism, An Unbridgeable Chasm*, Edinburgh, AK Press, 1995. For a major critique of marginal traditions within anarchism see L. Fabbri, *Influencias burguesas sobre el anarquismo*, Barcelona, Tierra libertad, 1918.

³⁴ S. Merlino, *Necessità e basi d’una intesa*, Turin, 1892, p. 13. See also pp. 11, 14, 28.

³⁵ Grave 1908, p. 3.

³⁶ Manfredonia 1980, p. 4.

anarchist endeavour is autonomy and the total emancipation of the individual, it may be argued that individualism is intrinsic to anarchism. As the anarcho-communist historian Daniel Guérin claims: ‘one cannot conceive of an anarchist who is not also an individualist’.²⁸ Similarly, according to the historian of philosophy Jean Préposiet, the belief in the primacy of individualism is the characteristic that unites all anarchists.²⁹ On this account, the term “individualist anarchism” would be a pleonasm or a truism.³⁰ Whilst it is true that there is an undeniable individualist element at the heart of anarchism, anarcho-individualism cannot be reduced to this individualist sentiment. Nor is it simply an extreme manifestation of individualist tendencies already existing within the anarchist movement.³¹ The sort of individualism one finds in the writings of classical anarchists such as Bakunin or Kropotkin is different in kind from that of anarcho-individualists. For classical anarchists, the individual is always part and parcel of society. As such, it is social emancipation that will lead to individual liberation. Conversely, for individualist anarchists, emancipation begins with the individual. What is more, individualists came up with a conception of permanent revolt that differs from that of their anarchist contemporaries. Individualist anarchism should thus be considered a political tradition in its own right – one that is much more complex and diverse than historians and other scholars of anarchism have generally acknowledged.

²⁸ D. Guérin, 1976, *L’anarchisme*, Gallimard, Paris, p. 31. Cf. Hamon 1895, pp. 96–7. Cf. H. Avron, *L’anarchisme au XXe siècle*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1979 ; García 2007, p. 217.

²⁹ J. Préposiet, *Histoire de l’anarchisme*, Paris, Tallandier, 2002, pp. 47–8.

³⁰ Cf. *L’Associazione*, n. 4, mai/juin 1890.

³¹ This is the position held by Dhavernas. Marxist thinkers have stressed the influence of various strands of individualism within anarchism in order to discredit the movement. See, for example, H. Avron, *L’anarchisme au XXe siècle*, Paris, PUF, 1979. Cf. Manfredonia 1980, p. 9.

as wide-ranging cultural rebellion’.³⁷ In a similar fashion, the author and activist Cindy Milstein contends that ‘the work of anarchism takes place everywhere, every day, from within the body politic to the body itself’.³⁸ Cultural theorist Süreyya Evren Türkeli concisely concludes: ‘what defines anarchism is not so much a position against the state but a politicized ethics towards life’.³⁹ This daily struggle against all forms of oppression may be, as Milstein suggests, what distinguishes the tradition most from other political ideologies: ‘anarchism’s generalized critique of hierarchy and domination, even more than its anticapitalism and antistatism, sets it apart from any other political philosophy’.⁴⁰

Traditional accounts of anarchism do not do justice to the complexity and diversity of the libertarian movement. They overlook or ignore marginal strands of the tradition that had a greater focus on themes such as art, sexuality, feminism, education, ecology, and communal living. When these topics are addressed, it is all too often as a side note. It is not only ideas and practices that are overshadowed, but individuals, in particular women and non-Western persons.

Traditional histories of anarchism are androcentric. Women anarchists are often relegated to the margins or simply excluded from them. As Martyn Everett notes, ‘Louise Michel, Lilian Wolfe and Marie Louise Berneri, mk Witcop and Maria Silva, are all conspicuous by their inexplicable absence’.⁴¹ Despite being probably the best-known woman anarchist, Emma Goldman is almost never considered a

³⁷ R. D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siècle France*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989, p. 3.

³⁸ C. Milstein, *Anarchism and Its Aspirations*, Oakland, AK Press, 2010, p. 41.

³⁹ Türkeli 2012, p. 135.

⁴⁰ Milstein 2010, pp. 39–40.

⁴¹ M. Everett, Review of Clifford Harper’s *Anarchy*, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 1, n. 1, 1993, p. 73.

political thinker in her own right.⁴² She never reaches the status of “theoretician” of the movement. Her influence is largely underplayed: she is often mentioned in passing as “the mother of anarcho-feminism” or regarded as a mere disciple of Kropotkin.⁴³ The lack of scholarly engagement with the role of women in anarchist history is a momentous blind spot.

Most scholarship on the anarchist movement is deeply Western-centric, if not simply Eurocentric.⁴⁴ Virtually all historians have completely ignored anarchist discourses from other parts of the world or dismissed them as peripheral or second-rate emulations of Western anarchism.⁴⁵ There is an assumed cultural hierarchy between anarchism proper in the West and ramifications of the movement in the rest of the world. *Bona fide* anarchism is that of “the Continent”; other expressions of the movement are fringe traditions brought by European immigrants.⁴⁶ In other words, thirdworld anarchism is dismissed as an exotic outgrowth, not to say byproduct, of a European movement. Anarchist history needs to be decolonialized. Fortunately, this diffusionist model, that is,

⁴² For examples from traditional historical accounts of anarchism, see J. Jose, Nowhere at home, not even in theory, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 13, n. 1, 2005.

⁴³ J. McKenzie & C. Stalbaum, Manufacturing Consensus, P. A. Weizz & L. Kensinger (eds.), *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.

⁴⁴ D. Miller, *Anarchism*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1984; I. Adams, *Modern Political Ideology*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993. Arguably, this Eurocentrism is deeply embedded in all Western scholarship. European anarchism equates to world anarchism just as European history equates to world history. See J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1993; J. Larrain, *Ideology and Cultural Identity*, Cambridge, Polity, 1994, p. 142; M. W. Lewis & K. E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, pp. 106–8.

⁴⁵ A. Heller & F. Feher, *Postmodern Political Condition*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988, ch. 3.

⁴⁶ J. Joll, *The Anarchists*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964; N. Perinone, *Italian Anarchism, 1864–1892*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 3.

on individualist practices as they developed in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France.²⁴

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon is another significant anarchist figure that did not have the impact on French individualists he is something thought to have had, unlike his momentous influence on the rest of the anarchist movement in France, especially with the rise of syndicalism, popular education, and socialist after the propaganda by the deed period of 1892–1894,²⁵ as well as on North American individualism, where his ideas were propagated as early as in the 1840s by Charles A. Dana and William B. Greene and where the prominent American individualist Benjamin Tucker translated his *The same argument applies to Georges Palante*.

Qu'est-ce que la Propriété? in 1876.²⁶ By contrast, Proudhon's name is hardly ever cited in individualist journals such as *l'anarchie*, the main individual journal founded by Libertad in 1905. Individualists by and large rejected is synthesis between the demands of the individual and those of the collective. The notable exception is, once again, Armand who embraced Proudhon's ideas, which he primarily based on Tucker's interpretations on his mutualism.²⁷ Armand ended up defending private property along with the individual's right to use the product of their labour as they see fit. Overall, Proudhon's influence on French individualism is negligible.

References to individualism within the French anarchist movement are scarce. One explanation for this lacuna is that anarchists consider themselves to be already and necessarily individualists. Indeed, individual autonomy has always been one of the key tenets of anarchism. If one of the goals of the

²⁴ The same argument applies to Georges Palante.

²⁵ G. Manfredonia, Lignées proudhoniennes dans l'anarchisme français, *Mil neuf cent*, n. 10, 1992, pp. 36–42.

²⁶ P. J. Proudhon, *What is Property?*, trans. B. R. Tucker, Cambridge, Massachusetts, John Wilson & Son, 1876.

²⁷ Manfredonia 1992, pp. 44–5.

had the merit of consolidating the demarcation between anarchoindividualism and forms of bourgeois individualism. Indeed, Stirner's ideas have a clear sociopolitical dimension. It is in Stirner's concept of association of egoists that the link between the individual and society is most explicit. Rejecting the distinction between revolt and revolution Stirner argued that individual revolt amounts to personal revolution, which will eventually be translated into the collective consciousness and revolutionary union. As Türkeli remarks, 'Stirner [was] used to expand the scope of the political arena'.²³

In short, Stirner is not the founding father of anarcho-individualism that he is often thought to be. It is historically inaccurate to view him as the individualist theoretician *par excellence*, let alone the figurehead of the movement. His egoist philosophy was a late addition to the tradition and had little to no influence upon the first wave of individualist anarchism. The reduction of individualism to Stirner's thought has undermined and eclipsed the diversity of individualist ideas and practices that emerged prior to 1914. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the long-term influence of *The Ego and Its Own*, which provided an original, fertile, and robust theory that became the ideological framework for many individualists. His thought helped establish individualist anarchism as an autonomous movement distinct from other expressions of individualism at the time. Stirner quickly took centre stage in individualist thought and his magnum opus is sometimes presented as the philosophical manifesto of the tradition. Stirner's influence proved to be an enduring one and nourishes anarchist theory to this day. That said, it does not serve the aim of this investigation to look at his theoretical contribution, which has already been discussed at length in independent studies, since he did not have such a great impact

²³ Türkeli 2012, p. 160.

the commonly held belief that anarchism emerged in Europe then diffused to the rest of the world, is being challenged and rightly rejected as a 'colonizer's model of the world'.⁴⁷ In truth, from the outset, anarchism as an opposition to forms of capitalist and authoritarian oppression had multiple geographical hubs from Argentina to China, including Armenia and Haiti. It was constantly shaped and reshaped by local preoccupations. Anarchist movements arose as a culturally non-hierarchical, diasporic, and interconnected transnational network of militants, intellectuals, and artists.⁴⁸

In summary, most scholars have examined anarchism from the perspective of political or intellectual history. Ideological accounts of anarchism overplay or underplay divisions within the movement. Traditional historiographical methods do not provide a satisfactory account of the reality of and relation between anarchist practices and ideas which, despite their diversity, belong to a shared political culture.⁴⁹ Anarchism cannot be reduced to political philosophy in the narrow sense of ideological perspectives on the state, the law, and property put forth by few great thinkers. Traditional anarchist historiogra-

⁴⁷ J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1993; J. Adams, *Non-Western Anarchisms*, Johannesburg, Zabalaza Books, 2003; R. Graham, *Anarchism: From anarchy to anarchism (3000 CE to 1939)*, Montreal, Black Rose Books, 2005; S. E. Türkeli, Postanarchism and the '3rd World', Political Studies Association Conference, University of Reading, 2006; Türkeli 2012, pp. 83–115; R. Kinna, *The Government of No One*, London, Penguin Press, 2019. It is worth noting that anarchist activism was present in Argentina since the 1860s. See D. Apter & J. Joll, *Anarchism Today*, London, Macmillan, 1971, p. 183; R. Graham, *Anarchism: From anarchy to anarchism (3000 CE to 1939)*, Montreal, Black Rose Books, 2005, p. 319. Note also that anti-colonialism still holds a minor place in anarchist studies today.

⁴⁸ For examples, see Türkeli 2012, pp. 97–8.

⁴⁹ A commendable attempt to represent anarchism anarchistically is found in Süreyya Evren Türkeli's thesis in which he uses multi-sceptical history, experimental history, and hyper-textuality. See S. E. Türkeli, *What is Anarchism? A Reflection on the Canon and the Constructive Potential of its Destruction*, PhD Thesis, Loughborough University, 2012.

phy has depicted the tradition in a hierarchical – hence non-anarchist – manner.⁵⁰ Ordinary, daily struggles, be they in the form of artistic heterodoxies, sexual and gender politics, or radical pedagogies are part and parcel of the movement. They are not peripheral but central to the anarchist endeavour. As such, they deserve their place the history of the libertarian movement.

Considering our discussion of anarchist historiography, it should now be apparent that postanarchists base their understanding of anarchism on a canonical history of the tradition. That is, they treat anarchism as a political ideology put forth by a handful of key Western thinkers.⁵¹ For May it is mainly Kropotkin and Bakunin (as well as Emma Goldman, Colin Ward, and Bookchin to a lesser extent); Newman adds Stirner and Lewis Call adds Nietzsche to the list. As argued above, this account was put forth by academics who sought to turn a complex and multi-faceted movement into a coherent text-based political ideology.⁵² Thereby, they failed to do justice to the historical, sociological, and anthropological dimensions of anarchism as a social movement and culture of resistance. By uncritically selecting passages from classical anarchist literature, postanarchists fail to be true to their own poststructuralist principles. As Türkeli points out, ‘anglophone postanarchists ... should have deconstructed existing historiography instead of taking it for granted. They relied on an obviously pre-poststructuralist (or non-poststructuralist) construction of history’.⁵³ Postanarchists misrepresent classical anarchism for they ground their understanding of the

⁵⁰ Türkeli 2012, p. 112.

⁵¹ E.g. L. Call, *Postmodern Anarchism*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2002, pp. 14, 67.

⁵² Türkeli (2012, pp. 37–8) suggests that since anarchism had always risked being relegated to the margins of history, the elaboration of a theoretical canon was a conscious effort to safeguard the future of the ideology.

⁵³ Türkeli 2012, p. 94. 156

published in the *Entretiens politiques et littéraires* in 1892.¹⁸ The translator regarded Stirner as an anarchist and described the book as ‘le 2004, p. 2. This is historically inaccurate as Stirner’s influence was minor until the 1900s and really only took root after the War. plus complet manuel d’anarchisme qui se puisse’.¹⁹ Yet by the turn of the century no more than a sixth of the book had been translated. It is only in 1899 that an integral French translation of Stirner’s book appeared as *L’Unique et sa propriété*.²⁰ Interest in Stirner gradually increased henceforth. His impact on early twentieth-century French anarchism can be observed in prominent individualists such as Janvion and Devaldès.²¹ That said, exclusive references to Stirner remained scarce. He was often read in parallel to other thinkers, especially Nietzsche. It is only after 1914 that he became regarded as an anarchist proper and as a key thinker of the individualist tradition. As noted above, E. Armand, the chief theoretician of individualism in France after the First World War, played an important role in establishing the centrality of Stirner’s thought for the individualist tradition.²² Stirner’s influence

¹⁸ Extracts of *The Ego and Its Own* were also published in *Mercure de France* in 1894 and 1895. The first English translation of *The Ego and His Own* was published in London and in New York by Benjamin Tucker in 1907.

¹⁹ G. Randall, *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*, septembre 1892.

²⁰ The first translation was by R. L. Reclaire and published by Stock. The second translation by Henry Lasvigne was published in 1900 by *La Revue Blanche*. The first public lecture on Stirner’s book was given in 1900 by Eugène Renard, who promulgated Stirner’s thought in his journal *L’Homme*. See E. Armand, le stirnérisme, *Supplément à « l’en dehors »*, mars 1934; *L’Unique*, 1 février -10 mars 1952. Finally, it is worth noting that French was the first language into which *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* was translated (Spanish, 1901; English, 1907; Italian, 1921).

²¹ Cf. Réflexions sur l’individualisme, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, p. 998.

²² Armand first read Stirner (alongside Nietzsche) in 1907, age 35. Mauricius, E. Armand tel que je l’ai connu, *E. Armand. Sa vie, sa pensée, son œuvre*, Paris, La Ruche ouvrière, 1964, p. 108. E. Armand, Le Stirnérisme, *L’Endehors*, n. 11, Paris-Orléans, mars 1934. From 1945 to 1956 Armand published a newspaper called *l’Unique*.

Max Stirner is often presented as the founding figure of individualist anarchism whilst, in reality, he had no influence on the early individualist movement.¹⁵ Stirner was a relatively late incorporation into the tradition. His only book, *The Ego and Its Own* [*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*], went by and large unnoticed when it was first published in 1844. During the following fifty years Stirner remained a rather obscure figure: he was regarded as a mere left-wing Hegelian amongst others. The German anarchist poet John Henry Mackay, who first read *The Ego and Its Own* in 1888, rediscovered Stirner and began to describe him as an individualist anarchist.¹⁶ He spent a considerable amount of time and energy trying to popularize his thought and eventually managed to turn him into a central theoretician of anarchism. In France, Stirner's ideas began to be disseminated in anarchist circles and literary journals at the end of the nineteenth century when the anarcho-individualist tradition was already established.

Stirner only had a minor influence upon early French anarcho-individualism. He remained largely unknown by the French intelligentsia until the twentieth century. A number of individualists were unimpressed by his book, which they felt expressed ideas that they had already articulated.¹⁷ The first French translation of extracts from *The Ego and Its Own* was

of their adherence to Stirner's dictum that the self achieves gratification even at the expense of social concerns'. See also Ward

¹⁵ Ward 2004, pp. 2, 62.

¹⁶ J. H. Mackay, *Max Stirner's kleinere Schriften und seine Entgegnungen auf die Kritik seines Werkes "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum"*, Berlin, Schuster und Loeffler, 1898. R. Kinna, *The Mirror of Anarchy*, S. Newman (ed.), Max Stirner, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Note that in the USA, Benjamin R. Tucker was writing on Stirner around the same time. See J. H. Mackay, *Dear Tucker. The Letters from John Henry Mackay to Benjamin R. Tucker*, San Francisco, Peremptory Publications, 2002.

¹⁷ Levieux, Stirner et Nietzsche, *l'anarchie*, n. 152, 5 mars 1908.

movement on an account of its history that is already reductive and short-sighted.⁵⁴

Postanarchists are making a category mistake by believing anarchism needs to be renewed. There can be no paradigm shift in anarchism because the anarchist movement does not behave like normal science. Anarchism evolves in relation to the changing socio-political contexts in which people find themselves.* As Milstein rightly stresses, 'from the start anarchism was an open political philosophy, always transforming itself in theory and practice ... Anarchism has to remain dynamic if it truly aims to uncover new forms of domination and replace them with new forms of freedom'.⁵⁵ Hence, postanarchism should be considered as a present-day manifestation of individual anarchism. As philosopher Benjamin Franks argues:

[It] represents the particular responses of a particular group in a limited historical context'; it is a 'reordering and re-emphasizing of certain principles (and de-emphasizing others) as a result of wider cultural changes ... It is better, therefore, to regard postanarchism as another modification of anarchist principles and discourses as part of a

⁵⁴ Postanarchists' treatment of classical anarchism is arguably even more simplistic than traditional historical studies. According to postanarchists, classical anarchists believe that human beings have a fixed essence and are inherently good. Even the theoreticians upon whom they claim to be basing their reading of classical anarchism (e.g. Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin) do not put forth such an essentialist theory of nature. Traditional historians of anarchism such as David Morland or Peter Marshall provide a better philosophical account of anarchist theory. See P. Marshall, *Human Nature and Anarchism, For Anarchism, History, Theory, and Practice*, D. Goodway (ed.), London, Routledge, 1989, p. 129; P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, London, Fontana, 1993, pp. 642–43; D. Morland, *Demanding the Impossible?*, London, Cassell, 1997.

⁵⁵ Milstein 2010, p. 6.

wider anarchist “family”, not a superior new form, which replaces all before it.⁵⁶

The anarchist movement has always been fluid, open-ended, and experimental. Post-anarchism is an illustration of anarchism renewing itself as ‘an active anti-politics of utopian desire’.⁵⁷

What other positive contribution to contemporary anarchist theory do postanarchists claim to make? Postanarchists reject representation, identity politics, vanguardism, and teleological visions of social change. They advocate a plurality of alternative practices, discourses, and lifestyles.⁵⁸ Crucially, they stress that postanarchism should be concerned with micropolitical struggle – with reprogramming and redesigning ourselves in the here and now.⁵⁹ In other words, on their view, self-creation should be the main horizon of radical politics today.⁶⁰

I believe that postanarchists rightly lay the emphasis on aspects of anarchism that have been unduly neglected and that are all too often eclipsed from the history of movement. However, they are unaware of the existence of the rich tradition of individualist anarchism upon which they could have drawn. In the second part of this thesis, I delve into the history of individualist anarchism in France, demonstrating that postanarchism and other forms of “neo anarchism” are attempts to ‘re-capture what anarchism has always been’.⁶¹ I thus hope to bring to light a more objective and lucid picture of the force and fertility of the anarchist movement.

⁵⁶ Franks 2007, pp. 128, 133.

⁵⁷ S. Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011, p. 70.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁵⁹ Call 2002, p. 52.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶¹ Türkeli 2012, p. 14.

mand¹² along with Stirner, Tucker, and Mackay.¹³ By isolating Armand as the main representative of French individualist anarchism, Maitron mistakenly conflated the French and American strands of individualism. In fact, it is Armand that introduced American individualism to the French intelligentsia and presented Stirner as the chief theoretician of the movement at a time when individualism was already well entrenched. In truth, though Armand was one of the most prolific individualist propagandists, he only represented one expression of French anarchoindividualism. Similarly, the all too common reduction of individualism to Stirner’s egoism is also misguided.¹⁴

¹² E. Armand (Ernest-Lucien Juin) was born in Paris to a communard father. He was the most prolific individualist theoretician, propagandist, and editor. After being a member of the Salvation Army, Armand gradually repudiated the Christianity of his younger years. Influenced by Tolstoy, he kept the idea that salvation is within. He embraced individualist anarchism at the turn of the century when he met his partner Marie Kugel. He took part in Libertad’s *causeries populaires* and became one of the main contributors to *l’anarchie*, which he ended up directing for a few months in 1912. Being familiar with about ten languages, he translated various foreign texts (especially from the USA) into French. In addition to individualist theory, he wrote extensively on free love as well as various other subjects such as libertarian colonies, pacifism, and nudism. With the support of his wife Denise Rougeault, he published numerous journals throughout his life, such as *L’ère nouvelle* (1901–1911); *Hors du troupeau* (1911–1912); *Les Réfractaires* (1912–1914); *Par delà la mêlée* (1916–1918); *L’Endehors* (1922–1939); *L’Unique* (1945–1956). Finally, he published *L’Initiation individualiste anarchiste* (1923), a syncretical work written in prison that was intended to be a compendium of anarchist individualism. Armand was also the main populariser of Stirner in France. As the editor of the most important individualist periodicals from 1915 to 1956, he was the pillar of individualist thought during the interwar period as well as after the War. He continued writing until his death at the age of 90. With over 80 entries, Armand was one of the main contributors to Faure’s *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

¹³ Maitron 1975, pp. 174–83.

¹⁴ Numerous authors make that mistake. For example, Varias (1997, p. 106) writes that ‘during the late nineteenth century, a number of anarchist intellectuals chose to contest the movement’s communal orientation because

literary individualism and does not give sufficient attention to experiments with communal living, education, sexuality, and the role of women in the movement. Furthermore, his evaluation of the philosophical force of anarcho-individualist forms of life and ethico-political practices tends to be superficial and calls for conceptual clarification and deeper investigation.

The French tradition of individualist anarchism is little-known even within anarchist studies. There is virtually no acknowledgment of anarcho-individualism as a political movement in its own right, unlike anarcho-syndicalism or anarcho-communism. For example, in a critique of Bookchin published in the journal *Anarchist Studies*, political scientist Laurence Davis claims that ‘the philosophy and practice of revolutionary personalism emerged from the most radical, politicised edge of the counterculture of the 1960s’, thus illustrating his ignorance of the history of anarchism.¹¹ If individualism is mentioned at all, it is usually in passing as a minor and hence negligible offshoot of the movement. Jean Maitron’s seminal work on the history of anarchism in France hardly discusses the tradition. The few pages at the end of his study that are dedicated to it only cite E. Ar-

Part II: Individualist Anarchism in France: An Historical Case Study

¹¹ L. Davis, Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unhelpful Dichotomy, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 18, n. 1, 2010, p. 62.

I- Individualism or Anarchy within Anarchism

Montrer combien l'autorité est irrationnelle et immorale, la combattre sous toutes ses formes, lutter contre les préjugés, faire penser. Permettre aux hommes de s'affranchir d'eux-mêmes d'abord, des autres ensuite ; faire que ceux qui s'ignorent naissent à nouveau, préparer pour tous ... une société harmonieuse d'hommes conscients, prélude d'un monde de liberté et d'amour.

Jules Lermina

Anarchist individualism grew alongside – as well as in opposition to – the anarchist movement. Ideologically eclectic and fluid, it manifested itself through various expressions of permanent and personal revolt against all forms of authority. Individualists were not only visionaries, intellectuals, and activists; they were propagandists, authors, poets, artists, educators, agitators, burglars, terrorists, vegans, and primitivists. Some founded free schools and libertarian colonies, others published journals and counterfeited money, others still practiced nudism and free love. Despite this vast diversity, their goal was the same: to live as anarchists in the here and now.

The term “individualism” can be misleading as many individualists were in favour of free communism as it was conceptualized in the late nineteenth century. Individualism and communism were not considered to be antithetical; quite the reverse, they were two ideals that most individualists aspired to

folded overtime. In fact, her examination sometimes appears to be little more than a contextual overview and leaves out important individualist figures. Last but not least, she omits to consider the ways in which the tradition differs from the broader anarchist movement and represents a distinct approach to political struggle.

Gaetano Manfredonia addressed these lacunae. His 1984 thesis remains the most comprehensive historical study on the subject to this day.⁹ Focusing on the gradual formation and evolution of French individualist anarchism in the period between 1880 and 1914, he argues that the tradition was a marginal yet significant branch of anarchism as well as an autonomous yet multifaceted school of thought and cultural movement with its own language, symbols, and unique way of conceiving of political engagement.¹⁰ Looking closely at the key figures of the tradition, he distinguishes between different types of individualists and stresses the ways in which they embraced, challenged, or departed from the mainstream anarchist movement. He also lays special emphasis upon the influence of artists, poets, and writers, which contributed to giving individualism a distinct aesthetic flavour. Manfredonia's study rightly isolates the specificity and diversity of individualist anarchism. Yet, he overstates the importance of

⁹ G. Manfredonia, *L'individualisme anarchiste en France (1880–1914)*, PhD Thesis, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 1984. See also G. Manfredonia, *Éléments pour une histoire de l'anarcho-individualisme sous la IIIe République*, MA dissertation, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 1980 ; M.-J. Dhavernas, *Les anarchistes individualistes devant la société de la Belle Époque 1895–1914*, PhD Thesis, Université Paris X Nanterre, 1981.

¹⁰ On anarchist songs see G. Manfredonia, *La chanson anarchiste en France des origines à 1914*, Paris, L'Harmattan, p. 1997 ; G. Manfredonia, *Libres ! Toujours... Anthologie de la chanson et de la poésie anarchistes du XIXe siècle*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 2011. On anarchist *argotique* language, oral culture, and revolutionary symbols, see also R. D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siècle France*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

arbitrarily chosen individualists.⁸ What is more, most of these works focus upon the fin-de-siècle and/or the Belle Époque and do not draw any historical continuity with present-day anarchism.

The first significant piece of academic scholarship on the history of individualist anarchism in France is a 1980 thesis by historian Marie-Josèphe Dhavernas. Dhavernas examines the context in which anarcho-individualism emerged focusing upon the period between 1895 and 1914. Her contention is that the individualist ideology was not grounded in politics as such so much as in the scientific, cultural, and socio-economic setting of the time. She shows that, like other anarchists, individualists were reacting to the apparent decadence and degeneration of late nineteenth-century society, which was epitomized by workers' atrocious daily existence. "Regeneration", that is, the recovery of one's humanity and vitality, was at the heart of their concerns. To this end, they took great care of their bodies through physical exercise and paid particular attention to "hygiene" (here to be understood broadly as ethical practices of self-care). Individualists sought to apply rational principles to all domains of life, especially education and sexuality. In doing so, they placed their hopes and aspirations in science, thereby echoing the positivism of their day. In their quest for the betterment of the individual, some even embraced various forms of neo-Malthusianism such as eugenics. Dhavernas ultimately contends that the dependence of individualism upon late nineteenth and early twentieth-century ideology is the main cause for its obsolescence and fall into oblivion. Dhavernas's pioneering work brings to light the intellectual framework in which individualism emerged. However, she exaggerates the influence of scientism upon the tradition and fails to track how it un-

⁸ For example, see A. Steiner, *Les en-dehors, Anarchistes individualistes et illégalistes à la "Belle Époque"*, Montreuil, L'Échappée, 2008. Varias only mentions Zo d'Axa and Manuel Devaldès as representatives of the tradition. He talks about 'other anarchists' or 'egoists'. Varias 1997, pp. 104–8.

bring together.¹ Like other anarchists, many believed that economic equality was a prerequisite for personal freedom.² Despite this common aim, individualists differed from "libertarian socialists" – the anarchist mainstream in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France – in many ways. Individualists criticized the majority of anarchists who embraced syndicalism. They saw them as no more than social reformists. Individualists distanced themselves most clearly from other anarchists in their view of revolution. Mainstream anarchists thought that social change could only be achieved through economic emancipation brought about by a sudden rupture with the existing social order. Individualists came to argue that such a break would not change individuals on a fundamental level. Instead, they argued that change should first take place in each person's ordinary, daily life:

Ce qui importe pour qu'une révolution soit durable, c'est qu'elle soit d'abord intérieure ... Nos socialistes, voir nos anarchistes, sont pour la plupart, tournés vers le dehors et demeurent moralement des hommes peu supérieurs à la moyenne.³

Il y eut une erreur considérable que commettent les socialistes révolutionnaires et les libertaires syndicalistes et coopérateurs, c'est de baser uniquement sur le fait économique, c'est de croire qu'une Révolution faite par des masses inconscientes ... qui détruiront les gouvernements, et

¹ The term individualism and its relation to communism was controversial and ambiguous from the outset. In *L'avantgarde cosmopolite*, the words communism and individualism were both used as synonyms of anarchism.

² Mauricius, for instance, talked about 'individualist communism'. See Mauricius, *L'anarchisme*, Paris, Éd. de l'anarchie, 1907, p. 13.

³ H. Ryner, cited in H. Day, *L'anarchie dans l'œuvre de Han-Ryner*, Paris, Pensée & Action, 1963, p. 15.

s'empareront de quelques usines, pourra changer la face du monde ; c'est de partager les hommes en classes sociales sans s'occuper de leur mentalité et de leur libération intellectuelle ... *Avant d'organiser la grande Révolution, il faut en faire une autre sans laquelle celle-ci sera frappée de stérilité et d'impuissance, c'est la révolution des cerveaux.*⁴

Il faut que l'individu se transforme lui-même dans ses conceptions, dans ses manières de faire ... Il faut transformer notre mentalité, nos pensées, nos façons d'agir, et, avec des façons nouvelles, envisager les rapports individuels – ne pas garder une façon de procéder découlant de nos préjugés intérieurs, de notre éducation faussée et servile.⁵

In other words, personal emancipation must precede social emancipation. Self-transformation as the instrument of change is the central pillar of individualist anarchism.

France is one of the European countries where the individualist tradition was most diverse, widespread, and long-lasting. It began with the rise of the anarchist movement in the fin de siècle, reached a climax in the late 1900s and early 1910s, and retains proponents to this day. Manifestations of individualist thought and practice can also be found in various artistic, social, and counter-cultural movements. Dadaism, surrealism, the Situationist International, the uprisings of May 68, squats, subcultures such as the hippies and the punks, democratic schools, rainbow gatherings, as well as the contemporary environmental movement and critiques of neoliberal consumerist society all bear the mark of anarcho-individualist at-

⁴ Mauricius, *L'anarchisme*, Paris, Ed. de l'anarchie, 1907, p. 14. Emphasis added.

⁵ Alber, *L'Unique*, n. 13, août-septembre 1946.

titudes and concerns.⁶ Individualist principles and aspirations are also alive and well in present-day practical and theoretical attempts to revive and revisit the anarchist enterprise. *Mutatis mutandis*, all these movements reject the existing archist social order grounded in capitalist and bourgeois values and seek new ways on life. As the historian Paul Avrich remarks:

Anarchists have exercised and continue to exert great influence. Their rigorous internationalism and their antimilitarism, their experiences of worker self-management, their struggle for the liberation of women and for sexual emancipation, their free schools and universities, their ecological aspiration to a balance between the city and the countryside, between man and nature, all of this is completely current.⁷

In spite of the resurgence of anarchism on the socio-political scene and growing scholarly interest in the movement, individualist anarchism remains a virtually unknown phenomenon and muchneglected area of research. Indeed, extremely few scholars have examined the subject. Some writers have sought to retrace the lives of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century individualists, but these studies cannot be considered rigorous scholarship. By and large biographical, they tend to be anecdotal or one-sided, if not apologetic or hagiographical. There have nevertheless been a number of historians who have produced serious academic works on anarchism in recent years; however, they rarely explicitly refer to individualism. Even when they do, their studies tend to be narrow in scope and only mention a handful of

⁶ C. Guérin, *Pensées et actions anarchistes en France 1950–1970*, Master's dissertation, Université Lille 3, 2000, pp. 120–1.

⁷ P. Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 7.

of expression and sought to foster audacious literary experimentation. As Armand wrote about one of his journals: 'Il va sans dire que les tolstoyens, naturiens, anarchistes chrétiens, individualistes nietzschéens, « colonistes » individualistes et autres dissidents de l'anarchisme officiel rencontreront ici l'accueil qu'implique l'antisectarisme de ce recueil'.¹⁷² Bringing together not only *gents de lettre*, but also poets and painters as well as bandits and bombers, individualist journals were undoubtedly some of the most vibrant and diverse cultural hubs in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France.¹⁷³

Individualists did not merely play the role of critics; their ideas also shaped anarchist thought and practice. They addressed questions such as sexuality and illegalism that were not at the forefront of mainstream anarchism. They also experimented with alternative lifestyles through the foundation of libertarian colonies known as *milieux libres*, some of which were vegan and naturist communes. These were islands of freedom where conventional modes of interaction could be disregarded and new, non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships based upon mutual aid and self-development could be invented.

It has also been noted that individualists were not merely concerned with the class struggle based on economic exploitation; they confronted the much broader question of authority and hierarchy, as manifested throughout all aspects of life such as in the family, schools, or sexual relationships. In doing so,

¹⁷² E. Armand, *les Réfractaires*, décembre 1912.

¹⁷³ Note that the organization of anarchist journals was criticized for being no different from that of non-anarchist ones: 'L'organisation, l'administration d'un journal anarchiste ne diffère en rien d'un journal socialiste ou bourgeois. Chacun a son cadre, son genre, son ton, sa note, etc., etc. Il faut marcher avec les uns ou avec les autres, il faut être du clan, il faut être orthodoxe, etc., aussi les journaux anarchistes ne le sont que de nom'. G. Butaud, *La Vie Anarchiste*, n. 11, 25 mai 1912.

as fundamentally hierarchical and authoritarian institutions. They rejected heads of syndicates as they rejected state authorities: on their view, corporatism, at its core, equalled patriotism. Syndicates could be all the more pernicious as they pretended that power was in the workers' hands while in truth perpetuating the rule of a minority over the majority. 'Le syndicalisme', wrote Mauricius, 'a démontré péremptoirement le danger autoritaire et centralisateur'.²⁶ For individualists, syndicates were little more than a new oligarchy amounting to a workers' aristocracy.²⁷

Individualists rejected the sanctification of the figure of the worker. The worker *qua* worker had no special status, no particular dignity. As Armand clearly stated: 'Les individualistes anarchistes n'ont jamais ou guère pactisé avec ce qu'on appelle l'ouvriérisme ... Ce qui importe pour les individualistes, ce n'est pas l'ouvrier, c'est l'individu'.²⁸ Just as the bourgeois, the worker was no more than the product of a social order that should be abolished.²⁹ The passive worker – the so-called *hon-*

Alexander II. His mother left him when he was 11 to continue her political activism in Russia. He began training as a photographer at age 15. He befriended Raymond Callemin in his adolescent years. After reading Kropotkin, the two teenagers decided to join the Stockel colony South-East of Brussels, which had been founded by a former miner in 1906. He was the editor of the colony's journal, *Communiste* (later *Le Révolté*) for which he wrote his first entry at age 17. He was one of the main contributors of *l'anarchie* between 1909 and 1912. He was in a relationship with Rirette Maîtrejean with whom he enjoyed discussing poetry and literature. He wrote under many pseudonyms. His main nom de plume as an individualist was *Le Rétif*. In 1917, when exiled in Spain, he wrote an essay on Nietzsche under the pseudonym Victor Serge. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1919. He died shortly after the Second World War after seven years of exile in Mexico.

²⁶ L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 16, février 1931.

²⁷ Note that individualists were not the only anarchists to criticize syndicalism. Anti-syndicalist opinion was also voiced in mainstream libertarian newspapers such as *Le Libertaire* or *Le riflard*.

²⁸ E. Armand, *L'Ouvriérisme (et les individualistes)*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*. See also Le Retif, *L'Ouvriérisme, l'anarchie*, n. 259, 24 mars 1910.

²⁹ Le Retif, *L'Ouvriérisme, l'anarchie*, n. 259, 24 mars 1910.

nête ouvrier – or the individual whose job was only useful in a capitalist and authoritarian society was thought to be responsible for their condition of exploitation: ‘L’ouvrier honnête, la brute productrice, le troupeau bêlant ne nous intéresse pas plus que le bourgeois exploiteur’.³⁰

Si tu fabriques des obus, si tu tisses des drapeaux, si tu distilles de l’alcool ... si tu édifies des prisons et si tu sanctionnes les lois, n’es-tu pas aussi néfaste que l’exploiteur, le rentier, le maître ? N’es-tu pas l’artisan des chaînes que tu te plains de porter ?³¹

Workers, guilty of voluntary servitude, acted as their persecutors’ accomplices.³² As such, they too could be social parasites.³³ As Sirgan wrote:

J’avais cru et je pense encore avec Flaubert que « tout individu qui pense basement est un bourgeois ». Partant de ce critérium solide, la majorité des ouvriers sont des bourgeois ... La mentalité du chauffeur larbin égale celle de son bourgeois de patron, et la mentalité du garçon de banque et la même que celle des clients de sa banques.³⁴

³⁰ Mauricius, *L’anarchisme*, Paris, Éd. de l’anarchie, 1907, p. 16.

³¹ A. Libertad, cited in A. Lorulot, *Albert Libertad*, Saint-Étienne, Publications de l’Idée libre, c. 1916, p. 11. Libertad and Armand listed jobs that they considered useless (e.g. building prisons and churches or making weapons and uniforms). See A. Libertad, *Le travail antisocial et les mouvement utiles*, Paris, 1909 and E. Armand, *Qu’est-ce qu’un anarchiste ? Thèses et opinions*, Paris, Éd. de l’anarchie, 1905, pp. 52–3.

³² E. Armand, *L’illégaliste anarchiste est-il notre camarade ?*, Paris, Éd. de l’en dehors, p. 6.

³³ For example, see Zo d’Axa, L’Honnête ouvrier, *La feuille*, n. 24, 15 février 1899; P. Paillette, Viv’ment ! brave ouvrier, cited in Manfredonia 1997, p. 192.

³⁴ Sirgan, Lettre ouverte à Pierre Martin du Libertaire, *l’anarchie*, 30 May 1912.

être le point de contact entre ceux qui ... vivent en anarchiste sous le seul contrôle de l’expérience et du libre examen.¹⁶⁹ The journal put forth a vision of struggle and individual emancipation from within society, as opposed to fully *en-dehors*. Its editors – Armandine Mahé, Jeanne Morand,¹⁷⁰ Rirette Maîtrejean, Mauricius, André Lorulot, Victor Serge, and E. Armand – were some of the key actors on the individualist scene.¹⁷¹ In 1905 an urban colony was founded by Libertad and his comrades in Montmartre, which the police labelled “the red nest”. There was enough space on the first floor of the house to accommodate a dozen people. Some made it their permanent home. It came to serve both as the head office of *l’anarchie* and as a social laboratory. Anarchists of all persuasions joined the community: artists, intellectuals, libertines, illegalists, including the members of the Bonnot Gang, as well as various social outcasts, mavericks, and ordinary criminals. It reflected the eclecticism of the individualist milieu as whole.

Individualist periodicals were committed to anti-dogmatism. Rather than seeking propagandists for the anarcho-individualist cause, journals such as *L’Endehors* and *l’anarchie* gave its contributors the most anarchic freedom

¹⁶⁹ Libertad, *l’anarchie*, n. 1, avril 1905.

¹⁷⁰ Jeanne Morand was born in Bey (Saône-et-Loire). Her father was an anarcho-syndicalist road worker. She worked as a seamstress and a housemaid. She took part in the *Causeries populaires* and entered into a relationship with Libertad with whom she sometimes defied the authorities. She wrote antimilitarist articles in various anarchist newspapers including *La Revue anarchiste* and *Le Végétalien*. She took charge of *l’anarchie* after Libertad’s death in 1908 alongside Armandine Mahé, and collaborated with E. Armand on the journal *L’En dehors*. Morand also organized popular drama workshops and a popular cinema cooperative.

¹⁷¹ It is also worth noting that the journal had numerous female contributors. They include: Lucienne Gervais (1907) ; Justine Lopitheatu (1910) ; Agnès Gray (1911) ; Denise Dervin (1911) ; Hermann Sterne (1911–1912) ; Juana Guerre (1912–1913) ; Suzanne Mirbel (1913) ; Rose Deshayes (1912–1914) ; Clémentine Delmotte (1912–1914) ; Florine Delmotte (1912–1914). This is not an exhaustive list.

s'épanouirait en sa personnalité toute jalouse, même de n'être qu'étiquetée.¹⁶²

Amongst the multiple newspapers that circulated individualist ideas in the first few years of the twentieth century,¹⁶³ the chief individualist organ was undeniably *l'anarchie* (1905–1914).¹⁶⁴ It played a central role in discussing and promoting individualist concepts as well as providing theoretical grounds for them.¹⁶⁵ The journal brought together two generations of anarchists and established a dialogue between conflicting expressions of individualism.¹⁶⁶ Its aim, as stated by Libertad, who launched the journal with his partners, the sisters Anna¹⁶⁷ and Armandine Mahé,¹⁶⁸ was straightforward: 'Rompre tout à coup avec les idées reçues de l'humanité ... Cette feuille désire

¹⁶² Zo d'Axa, *De Mazas à Jerusalem, L'Endehors*, Paris 1974, p. 113.

¹⁶³ *Le Flambeau* (1901–1902) ; *L'ère nouvelle* (1901–1911) ; *Le réveil de l'esclave* (1902) ; *L'Ennemi du peuple* (1903–1904), *Le balai social* (1904–1905).

¹⁶⁴ *l'anarchie* was first intended to give a voice to the *causerie populaire* movement launched by Libertad and Paraf-Javal in 1902. According to a police report, in 1908 4,000 issues were published weekly, but only 1,500 were sold. Archive de la Préfecture de Police, BA 1507.

¹⁶⁵ Mauricius, *l'anarchie*, n. 188, novembre 1908.

¹⁶⁶ Manfredonia, Libertad et le mouvement des causeries populaires, *Publications périodiques de la «Question Sociale»*, n. 8, 1998, p. 24.

¹⁶⁷ Anna Mahé was born in Bourgneuf-en-Retz (loire-Inférieure). Her father was a cobbler. She studied in Nantes where she obtained her teacher's certificate in 1900 and where she worked for a couple of years. In 1903 she moved to Paris where her sister Armandine. Anna entered into an intimate relationship with Libertad, who was also her sister's partner, and with whom she had a child called Émile Marcel (nicknamed Minus) in 1904. In 1905 she co-founded the journal *l'anarchie* with Libertad and Armandine. She wrote in various anarchist journals, including *Le Libéraire* and *Les Révoltés* mainly on the theme of education. She promoted a radical simplification of spelling [*l'ortographe simplifiée*].

¹⁶⁸ Armandine Mahé was trained as a teacher and a seamstress. She co-founded the individualist journal *l'anarchie* with her sister Anna and her partner Libertad with whom she had a child called Diamant. She took charge of the journal for a while after Libertad's death in 1908 alongside Jeanne Morand.

Individualists did not draw a fundamental distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but between the "abrutis", "crétins", "avilis" and the "conscients", "raisonnables", "libres".³⁵ The former were those who were ignorant of their condition and hence retained archist biases; the latter were those who were aware of the exploitation and oppression at the heart of society and strove to transform themselves. Anyone could instigate and further this transformation: 'il faut s'adresser à tous les hommes, sans distinction de métier (ni de race, ni de religion, ni de sexe, ni de patrie)'.³⁶ 'Les classes économiques ne nous intéressent que fort peu ... une seule chose nous importe, c'est la valeur intrinsèque de l'individu'.³⁷ 'En réalité, m'est sympathique tout individu qui lutte contre la Maîtrise, quelle que soit sa situation sociale'.³⁸ Individualists neither favoured nor identified with a particular class; they were cosmopolitans who believed in the revolutionary potential of each oppressed person and hence rejected vanguardism.³⁹

Individualists argued that syndicalism (along with socialism more broadly) failed to take into consideration the most marginalized and ostracized figures of society: the downtrodden who had neither job nor shelter such as the unemployed, vagrants, criminals, thieves, prostitutes, and other members of the so-called *Lumpenproletariat*. By contrast, individualists saw these social outcasts as allies and even moral exemplars

³⁵ Mauricius, *L'anarchisme*, Paris, Éd. de l'anarchie, 1907, p. 16.

³⁶ A. Lorulot, *Socialisme ou anarchie*, Romainville, 1910, p. 19.

³⁷ Mauricius 1907, p. 15.

³⁸ P. Chardon, Lettre à E. Armand, 9 novembre 1915, *Pierre Chardon, sa vie, sa action, sa pensée*, Paris, Éd. de l'en dehors, 1928, p. 29.

³⁹ E. Armand, Notre "monde à venir" et l'actuelle involution, *l'en dehors*, n. 19–20, septembre 1923. Some even denied the class struggle altogether, for there is no such thing as the interest of a group of people. As Mauricius wrote in *l'anarchie* (18 Mar. 1909): 'La guerre est individuelle. La lutte des classes n'est point.'

with whom they identified.⁴⁰ ‘La masse noire’, as Ernest Girault called them, were commended for living as outsiders (*en-dehors*) and embodying alternative ways of life.⁴¹ As a result, they were sometimes described as models of individual emancipation.⁴² Indeed, they were seen as ‘heroic individualists’ and ‘solitary agents of change’.⁴³ The tramp or vagabond (*chemineau, trimardeur, vagabond, errant*) became a romanticized anarchist icon whom historian John Hutton describes as ‘a figure conceived simultaneously as nonconformist hero and prototypical social victim’: ‘proof of the ability of a liberated few to live free of the constraints of bourgeois society; simultaneously, the vagabond was portrayed as the victim of the bourgeoisie’s indifference to the poor’.⁴⁴ Writers such as Rimbaud, Mirbeau, or Devaldès wrote poems, essays, songs, and plays on vagabonds.⁴⁵ Their lives were depicted by neo-impressionist artists such as Camille and Lucien Pissarro, Maximilien Luce, Henri-Edmond Cross, and Théo van Rysselberghe. It the individual revolt of outcasts that was most highly praised: ‘Where Marxist socialism saw the strength of the working class in the potential unity against those who exploited it, anarchists saw the strength of the *chemineau* in his very isolation and refusal to conform’.⁴⁶ As early as in the 1890s individualists organized gatherings known as “*soupes conférées*” especially for those forced to live on the fringes of society. They asserted their right

⁴⁰ G. Manfredonia, *Chanson et identité libertaire, La culture libertaire*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, pp. 272–4.

⁴¹ E. Girault, *Le Libertaire*, n. 82, 3/6 juin 1897.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ J. Hutton, *Les Prolos Vagabondent*, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 72, n. 2, 1990, pp. 296, 302.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 296–7.

⁴⁵ E.g. J. Richepin, *La Chanson des Gueux*, 1876; R. Henry, *Les Vagabonds* (1896); M. Devaldès, *Le Trimardeur*, *Le Libertaire*, avril 1896. J. Richepin, *Le Chemineau* (1897); A. Retté, *Un Vagabond chanté*, *Almanach du Père Peinard pour 1899*, Paris, 1899, p. 20. For further examples, see Hutton 1990, p. 297.

⁴⁶ Hutton 1990, p. 299.

1914.¹⁵⁶ Remarkably, in 1913 almost a third of all anarchist publications were produced by individualists.¹⁵⁷ The most important individualist journals were *L’Endehors* (1891–1893)¹⁵⁸ and *l’anarchie* (1905–1914).¹⁵⁹ *L’Endehors* is particularly noteworthy for its eclecticism and anti-dogmatism. Zo d’Axa, the charismatic founder of the journal, advocated the free expression of all individuals no matter the school of thought, literary tradition, or political movement (including anarchism itself) with which they identified. ‘Nous vivons au-delà des lois’ wrote Zo d’Axa, ‘même celles des anarchistes’.¹⁶⁰ *L’Endehors* was resolutely individualist: ‘Je ne suis sûr de rien à part du fait que chacun doit vivre pour soi’ asserted Zo d’Axa who expressed his vision for the newspaper as follows:¹⁶¹

Je voudrais donner une feuille libre aux écrivains de ce temps assoiffés comme moi de parler franc, une tribune où l’on pourrait aller jusqu’au bout de sa pensée. Je voulais la première réalisation de ce groupement idéal, sans hiérarchie, sans comparses, dans lequel l’individu, l’artiste,

¹⁵⁶ Manfredonia 1984, p. 397. See pp. 536–9 for a full chronological list. See also R. Bianco, *Répertoire des périodiques anarchistes de langue française, 1880–1983*, PhD Thesis, Aix-Marseille, 1987.

¹⁵⁷ Manfredonia 1984, p. 397. Individualism had become a legitimate movement within anarchism. The popularization of Stirner’s thought had given it philosophical force. With seven journals in publication in 1913, individualism was thriving intellectually at the eve of the First World War.

¹⁵⁸ *L’Endehors* published 91 issues between 5 May 1891 and 19 February 1893. It was sold for 6 cents and 6,000 copies were issued weekly. Some of the most renowned writers, artists, and activists of the time contributed to the journal. These include Octave Mirbeau, Émile Henry, Georges Darien, Errico Malatesta, Maximilien Luce, Paul Verlaine, Bernard Lazare, Jehan Ric-tus, Tristan Bernard, Henri de Régnier, and Louise Michel. Zo d’Axa also published 25 issues of *La Feuille* between 6 October 1897 and 28 March 1899.

¹⁵⁹ *L’anarchie* published 485 issues between 13 April 1905 and 30 July 1914. Around 6,500 copies were issues weekly.

¹⁶⁰ Zo d’Axa, *L’Endehors*, n. 124. Find French citation

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, n. 12, préface.

Il n'est rien qui soit plus dangereux pour le présent ou l'avenir de l'humanité que le conformisme social. Et quand je dis conformisme social, je sous-entends : conformisme économique, conformisme éthique, conformisme éducatif, conformisme récréatif, etc.¹⁵⁴

Ostracism was not due to the movement's lack of success; it was a conscious choice that was part and parcel of the individualist project and *en-dehors* way of life. Individualists are, by definition, on the fringes: they are mavericks and dissenters. The names of their journals speak for themselves: '*Les Réfractaires*', '*Hors du troupeau*', '*Par-delà la mêlée*'. As Armand explained:

En son for intérieur, [l'individualiste] est toujours un asocial, un réfractaire, un en-dehors, un en marge, un à côté, un inadapté. Et pour obligé qu'il soit de vivre dans une société dont la constitution répugne à son tempérament, c'est toujours en étranger qu'il y campe.¹⁵⁵

The individualist prided themselves on being an '*irrégulier*', '*inadapté*', '*insubordonné*', '*insoumis*', '*original*', '*excentrique*', '*unique*'. In brief, the individualist is an intentional deviant.

It is nonetheless important to bear in mind that individualists almost never completely withdrew from society. They relentlessly promoted and defended the anarchist cause. Propaganda by the word was always at the heart of their endeavours. Individualists were prolific writers as evidenced by their numerous publications: there were about 40 different individualist newspapers and periodicals published between 1880 and

¹⁵⁴ E. Armand, *Le Naturisme individualiste*, Limoges, Supplément à l'en dehors, n. 212-3, août 1931.

¹⁵⁵ E. Armand, *Anarchiste Individualiste*, *l'Encyclopédie Anarchiste*.

to exist on their own terms and encouraged them to defend that right by inciting them to revolt.⁴⁷ An individualist journal called *Le Trimard* was launched in 1895.⁴⁸ It was meant to be an organ that voiced the demands of the jobless.⁴⁹

Last but not least, individualists believed that syndicalism led to the abandonment of revolutionary struggle and constituted an agent of social conservatism (or at best reformism). Individualists argued that the general strike would constitute a deterrence to direct action and individual revolt.⁵⁰ More importantly, insofar as syndicates represented wage workers, they were a direct product of the established social order, which they could only perpetuate rather than overturn. Wage labour was never going to be abolished, but simply reformed and ameliorated. 'Qu'est-ce qu'un syndicat?', asked Paraf-Javal, 'C'est un regroupement où les abrutis se classent par métiers pour essayer de rendre moins intolérables les rapports entre les patrons et les ouvriers'.⁵¹ From the individualist perspective, syndicalists did not call into question the foundations of archist society; they merely sought to make exploitation more bearable. In doing so, they contributed to the consolidation and durability of the capitalist system. 'Tout espoir d'affranchissement disparaît', wrote Georges

⁴⁷ Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris, BA 1506. Cf. Manfredonia 1984, p.121. Five hundred people attended a *soupe conference* on 6 December 1891.

⁴⁸ *Le Trimard*, n. 1, 4 juillet. 1895. A newspaper called *Les Vagabonds individualistes libertaires* was published from 1916 to 1924.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Cf. P. Martinet, *L'arme*, n. 6, 7 septembre 1890.

⁵¹ Paraf-Javal, *Le Libéraire*, 2 avril 1904.

Butaud,⁵² ‘seul ... l’espoir d’amélioration persiste’.⁵³ Therefore, for individualists, syndicalism was, through and through, a great sham that impeded genuine individual emancipation.⁵⁴

Personal emancipation became the rallying call for these new self-proclaimed individualists: ‘Nous avons quitté le mouvement et sommes devenus des Individualistes dans le sens absolu ... chacun de nous doit mettre sa cause sur lui-même’.⁵⁵

L’égoïsme est dans la nature humaine. Il pousse l’être humain à la complète satisfaction de ses appétits, à la conservation de sa vie, à la libre disposition de ses facultés, toute chose indiscutablement respectable ... L’égoïsme du jour n’a rien de commun avec l’égoïsme naturel qui fait de l’homme un être véritablement supérieur ... Détruisez le principe factice de la propriété individuelle et aussitôt l’égoïsme devient la libre possession de son soi, l’amour de son originalité, l’intégral développement de son individu. Il assure alors à l’homme la revendication constante et juste de ses intérêts, la connaissance de sa valeur,

⁵² Georges Butaud was born in Marchienne-au-Pont, Belgium, into the petite bourgeoisie. He worked as a stonemason in Switzerland before moving to Vienne (Isère) where he launched the journal *Le Flambeau* (1901–1902) and began collaborating with E. Armand, Henri Zisly, and Sophie Zaïkowska, who became his life partner and collaborator, on the foundation of a libertarian colony. It is around this time that he became a vegetarian teetotaler. He wrote several articles for *l’anarchie* between 1910 and 1911. Alongside his partner, he was the most active proponent and instigator of the *milieux libres* (Vaux (1902–1907), Bascon (1911–1951), Saint-Maur (1913–1914)). After the Great War, Butaud became one of the main individualist advocates of veganism. In 1922 he established two *Foyers Végétaliens*, one in Nice and one in Paris. He co-founded the periodical *Le Végétalien* (1924–1929) and published articles in the *Néo-Naturien* (1921–1927).

⁵³ G. Butaud, *La vie anarchiste*, n. 9, 18 décembre 1912.

⁵⁴ Cf. Mauricius, Le bluff du syndicalisme, *L’anarchie*, n. 217, 3 juin 1909.

⁵⁵ *L’Anonymat*, 1896. Cited in Manfredonia, 1984, p. 146.

“What do I desire?”, and “How can we get it?”. In short, the individualist revolt triad consists essentially in personal deconstruction, emancipation/self-affirmation, and collective experimentation.

vi. The Contribution of Individualism

*Au fond, nous ne savons pas assez que nous sommes
nos propres maîtres*

Émilie Lamotte

It is all too easy to dismiss individualism as a peripheral branch of anarchism that had a minor impact on the movement as a whole. It may be argued that it never represented a serious challenge, let alone an alternative, to the mainstream of anarchism; that it was an urban phenomenon centred almost exclusively in Paris;¹⁵² and that its figureheads were often young and isolated individuals, some of whom were not all that politically active and never had more than a few dozen followers.¹⁵³ In short, detractors may contend that individualism was marginal both in terms of number of partisans and impact on society.

The influence of individualism should not be underestimated. Individualism was at the heart of virtually all controversies surrounding the libertarian movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Individualists categorically refused to adhere to any kind of hierarchical system or social organization. They stood firm in their denunciation of and rebellion against the norms and conventions, not only of archist society, but of the libertarian movement itself:

¹⁵² Manfredonia 1984, p. 399.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 396.

L'anarchiste-individualiste s'intéressera aux associations formées par certains camarades en vue de s'arracher à l'obsession d'un Milieu qui leur répugne. Le refus de service militaire, celui de payer l'impôt auront toute sa sympathie ; les unions libres, uniques ou plures, à titre de protestation contre la morale courante ; l'illégalisme en tant que rupture violente ... d'un contrat économique imposé par la force ; l'abstention de toute action, de tout labeur, de toute fonction impliquant maintien ou consolidation du régime intellectuel, éthique ou économique imposé ... sont des actes de révolte convenant essentiellement au caractère de l'anarchisme-individualiste.¹⁵⁰

Individualist revolt is thus also constructive. The individualist way of life is about edification just as much as it is about destruction; it is about deconditioning just as much as it is about reconditioning.

In summation, individualist revolt basically follows a three-step process or as Armand put it, a threefold ideal, namely human, moral, and social.¹⁵¹ First, it means rejecting one's anarchist biases, that is, constantly fighting the "enemy within" – the remnants of social indoctrination that manifest themselves in the alienated self through prejudices, fears, and inhibitions. Second, it means working towards the re-appropriation of one's intellectual, moral, and, physical abilities, as well as towards the satisfaction of one's senses and the fulfilment of one's potential. Third, it means the creation of new forms of life, new ways of relating to others, new social structures (collectives, cooperatives, communes, etc.). In other words, the individualist asks themselves: "What do I repudiate?"

¹⁵⁰ E. Armand, *Petit manuel anarchiste individualiste*, Paris, 1911, p. 12.

¹⁵¹ E. Armand, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Anarchiste*, *La brochure mensuelle*, février 1915, p. 14.

et l'inacceptation assurée de tout empiètement sur les façons d'agir qui lui sont propres.⁵⁶

The locus of concern was that of the individual rebelling alone against society. 'L'individu est tout, la société n'est rien' claimed the writer and sculptor Georges Deherme.⁵⁷ Elsewhere, he added: 'Pour agir efficacement, il faut s'attacher à la cause : modifier l'individu, le perfectionner'.⁵⁸ In other words, the only way in which society can be improved in the long run is through the betterment of individuals. As Pierre Martinet, one of the pioneers of individualism, wrote: 'Ce n'est pas de la recherche du bien-être général que peut découler le bien-être particulier. C'est de la recherche du consentement individuel que s'augmente la richesse dont peut profiter la collectivité'.⁵⁹ Social change was to be instigated by individuals themselves through acts of revolt and/or selftransformation. Libertarians socialists condemned individualists for giving up on revolution in favour of personal emancipation. As Merlino wrote :

Nous nous séparons nettement des partisans de l'action individuelle, parce que nous croyons qu'il faut subordonner tout intérêt à la révolution sociale ... il est à peine nécessaire de dire que nous sommes en théorie et en pratique aux antipodes des anarchistes individualistes.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *L'avant garde cosmopolite*, n. 6, 9–15 juillet 1887.

⁵⁷ G. Deherme, *La Question Sociale*, *La Renaissance*, n. 66, 5 avril 1896.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ P. Martinet, *La Renaissance*, n. 116, 29 July 1896. Martinet was the members of the first Parisian group that identified as individualist in 1890–1891. In 1895 he launched the individualist journal *La Renaissance*, which published 117 issues between 24 December 1895 and 27 July 1896. According to Jean Grave, 'c'est sous sa conduite que commencèrent à se former les idées ultra-individualistes'. Grave 1973, p. 208.

⁶⁰ Merlino, *Necessità e basi d'una intesa*, Turin, 1980 [1892], p. 11.

This is the key stage at which individualism can legitimately start to be considered a distinct branch of a more socially oriented anarchism. Individualists were no longer mere critics of the predominantly syndicalist libertarian movement. They began to put forward an alternative vision of social change and political engagement centred upon the idea of existential regeneration. A new tradition was born: *l'anarchisme individualiste*.

Individualists often viewed themselves as the only true anarchists. Many regarded libertarian socialists as mere reformers. Individualists believed they were preserving the purity of the anarchist tradition rather than making compromises that would denature the fundamental aims of the movement. There were attempts at founding an individualist federation, yet all were unsuccessful due to the many divergent opinions between individuals, several of whom viewed the very idea of an organization as antithetical to their conception of individualism.⁶¹ Organization was seen as disrespecting individual autonomy, as being an obstacle to action, and as fomenting conflict within its own ranks. Moreover, it made activists an easier target for police repression.⁶² All in all, as they were few in number, individualists were seen as dissenters and were quickly ostracised by the anarchist majority. Individualists remained on the margins of the mainstream libertarian movement, which they kept criticising and challenging.

By the turn of the century individualism was no longer considered a viable alternative to the dominant libertarian socialist movement.⁶³ Individualists appeared unable to respond to the changing socio-economic climate as traditional manufacturing

⁶¹ Cf. *L'Ennemi du peuple*, 6 and 30 septembre 1904.

⁶² Gautier, cited in Manfredonia 1984, p. 55. Note that the question of the advantages and disadvantages of organization was not merely an individualist concern; it was a subject of debate for other anarchists as well. See Manfredonia 1984, pp. 54–63. 268

⁶³ The Dreyfus affair had little impact upon individualism. Individualists' reaction was eclectic, but most were proDrefusards. Many also took it as an opportunity to voice their anti-militarism and anti-clericalism. Their aim

tionnaires pour l'individu sera donc de reprendre possession de son corps, de ses désirs, de ses gestes quotidiens.¹⁴⁸

Only then does the individualist become capable of reconditioning themselves – of expressing their unique potential and personality. The individualist is eager to develop their abilities, be they intellectual, artistic, ethical, physiological, emotional, or sexual:

L'individualisme c'est la doctrine qui pousse l'individu à vouloir le développement intégral de sa personnalité, l'épanouissement de ses facultés, la satisfaction de ses aspirations. L'individualiste veut vivre de façon belle et intense, il veut goûter à toutes les joies physiques, sentimentales, intellectuelles.¹⁴⁹

The individualist way of life is characterised by a constant existential revolt against all forms of authority. Individualists fought against state apparatuses, against the pillars of capitalism, against patriarchy and the nuclear family, against the priest and the teacher, against the values of bourgeois society – and against how they regulate everyday customs and invade one's innermost life. Yet permanent revolt also implies finding alternatives to that which one repudiates. Against the idea of nation and patriotism, they advocated internationalism; against the army, they advocated antimilitarism and pacifism; against industrial civilisation, they advocated naturism and vegetarianism; against religion, they advocated freethought and science, against marriage and prudishness, they advocated free love and polyamory; against state or church schools, they advocated free schools and autodidacticism.

¹⁴⁸ Manfredonia 1984, pp. 406–7.

¹⁴⁹ A. Lorulot, *L'individualisme et le communisme*, Romainville, 1911.

society. Individualists rejected this approach as being alienating and ineffective if not counterproductive. They do not want to renounce present happiness. On the contrary, they seek to embrace happiness and *joie de vivre* in the present: 'Nul d'entre nous ne se résignera à l'attente d'un avenir problématique. C'est présentement que nous voulons obtenir le plaisir de vivre'.¹⁴⁵

The individualist strives to live as an anarchist in the ordinary and daily here and now. This is why individualism is often described not as an ideology or a *weltanschauung* but as an attitude or a way of life: 'Ce n'est pas un système, un recueil de prescriptions, une philosophie stérile, c'est une application constante, une réalisation, une activité de chaque jour'.¹⁴⁶ Individualism is first and foremost grounded in daily practices of freedom.

To practice freedom first means treating one's inner or subjective life as the fundamental battleground of the struggle against the anarchist order. By scrutinizing the activities, interactions, and choices of everyday life, individualists sought to cultivate a greater sense of self-awareness so as to be able to rid themselves of ingrained prejudices: 'Faire la révolution soi-même, se délivrer des préjugés, former des individualités conscientes, voilà le travail de l'anarchie'.¹⁴⁷ The primary act of revolt is the emancipation of the alienated self and the reclamation of one's intellectual, moral, and, above all, physical abilities:

Le projet individualiste se fonde sur une volonté de la part des exploités de se réappropriier leur moi « physique », « réel » écrasé ou déformé par le poids de la société ... Le premier des actes révolu-

¹⁴⁵ V. Serge, *Le Rétif : articles parus dans « l'anarchie »*, Paris, Librairie Monnier, 1989, pp. 50–1.

¹⁴⁶ Armand, p. 46. *Les Réfractaires*, juillet 1913.

¹⁴⁷ Bénard, *l'anarchie*, 26 mai 1910. Emphasis added.

trades were gradually being replaced by the service sector. Propaganda by the deed, which had hitherto been their main mode of action, came to be regarded as a failed tactic. More and more syndicalists were founding cooperative associations and their ideology was starting to spread across the masses. In 1898 there were over 375,000 members of the *bourse du travail*. Individualists, on the other hand, had fewer and fewer supporters and became increasingly marginal. By the end of the nineteenth century insurrectionary individualist anarchism centred upon individual acts of revolt had become moribund.

ii. The Second Wave of Individualism (1900–1914)

Ce n'est pas dans cent ans, tu sais, qu'il faut vivre en anarchiste, c'est tout de suite. C'est tout de suite que l'anarchiste doit mettre ses actes en accords avec ses idées.

Libertad

Au fond, nous ne savons pas assez que nous sommes nos propres maîtres

Émilie Lamotte

A new generation of individualists emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century. This new group belonged to the first generation of French children (those born between 1870 and 1890) who attended the modern Republican school, which was founded as a result of the Ferry laws of 1881–1882 that rendered primary education free, secular, and mandatory. Yet, their social background forced most of them to leave school at age 12 or

is simple: the complete and definite suppression of the army and the Church. See *Le réveil de l'esclave*, 1902.

13 to start working. Despite having been better educated than their parents, opportunities for social mobility remained scarce. Individualists refused to be condemned to a social fate that prevented them from cultivating their moral, intellectual, and physical abilities. Public education had given them the courage to question the status quo. As heirs to the Enlightenment, they had great faith in science and reason as the key instruments to rid society of prejudice and to lay the ground for a society free from domination and exploitation. They sought to create alternative ways of life and social frameworks to strive towards their own emancipation, regeneration, and edification. It is at this stage that French individualist anarchism became most widespread and theoretically refined.

It is between 1900 and 1905 that individualism took root as an established movement that clearly distinguished itself from mainstream anarchism as well as from the primitive forms of individualism that had emerged in the 1880s and 1890s. New individualist journals and periodicals were launched, namely *Le Flambeau* (1901–1919); *L'Ère nouvelle* (1901–1911); *Le Réveil de l'esclave* (1902); *L'Ennemi du peuple* (1903–1904); *Le Balai social* (1904–1905); and, most importantly, *l'anarchie* (1905–1914).

According to the mainstream anarchist journal *Le Libéraire*, there were nine individualist groups in France in 1903.⁶⁴

This new generation of individualists rejected many of the political practices and social visions of their forebears. The most significant of these changes – perhaps the central point of discord between individualists and the rest of the anarchist

⁶⁴ (1) La Colonie communiste (Henry, Butaud, Zaïkowska); (2) Les causeries du XIe (Paraf-Javal, Libertad); (3) Les Iconoclastes de Montmartre (Janvion); (4) Les (Zisly, Gravelle, Beaulieu); (5) La Ligue Internationale Anti-militariste (Baulieu, Libertad); (6) L'Ère Nouvelle (Armand, Kügel); (7) L'Individu Libre (Carteson); (8) Le Réveil de l'Esclave (Roussel); (9) L'Autonomie Individuelle (Renard).

Solidarity, mutual aid, and camaraderie are core individualist values. The individualist never turns a comrade down should they need hospitality. They are open to organization or contracts so long as they are voluntary, cancellable at any time, and increase their independence from society. The organizational models to which individualists refer are Stirner's association of egoists and sometimes Proudhon's contractual and mutualist society.¹⁴³

For individualists, all social change springs from conscious individual action. Any social movement is ultimately grounded in the individual's desire to fight against injustice and their will to assert their autonomy. The agent of change is the individual themselves, regardless of their socio-economic background. The individualist acts as an exemplar who inspires other individuals. Hence, personal change is a prerequisite for social change:

Une révolution qui se propose de transformer un état de choses qui dure depuis toujours, qui prétend établir des modes d'existence absolument nouveaux, doit de toute évidence être précédée d'une révolution capitale des mœurs, coutumes et mentalités.¹⁴⁴

There can be no genuine social revolution on the macro level until there are individual revolutions on the micro level. Individual transformation precedes or grounds social transformation.

The individualist does not wish to sacrifice or subordinate the present for some idealized future. Individualists viewed mainstream libertarians as being fundamentally no different from socialists insofar as they believed that sacrifices needed to be made in the present in hopes of achieving a utopian

¹⁴³ Note that Tucker established a similar system.

¹⁴⁴ Mauricius, *Mon anarchisme*, Paris, 1913, p. 3.

v. Individualism as an Ideology and Way of Life

Défie-toi de toi-même, Camarade.

Jules Lermina

Individualism provided an alternative way of apprehending political engagement. There are two main ways of conceiving of the relationship between the individual and society. Socialists, on the one hand, view the individual as the product of society. Individualists, on the other hand, view the individual as an autonomous and independent monad. In the former case, collective emancipation leads to individual emancipation. This is the position held by classical anarchists such as Bakunin or Kropotkin. Individualists turn this perspective upside down. It is the individual who is considered to be the nucleus and starting point of all emancipatory processes.¹⁴²

Individualism favours the demands of the individual over those of society. Indeed, the individual is the only intrinsic good and the locus of all values. An act is good only insofar as it benefits the individual. The ultimate aim of the individualist's actions is their own interest and pleasure; they strive for their own satisfaction, happiness, and flourishing. In other words, they are moral egoists and hedonists. The individual is both the starting point and the endpoint of individualist anarchism.

The individualist refuses to be a cog of the anarchist machine or an instrument of power. They are neither exploited nor exploiters, neither slave nor master, neither producer nor consumer. Their quest for freedom is one of autonomy in the sense of self-government, self-mastery, and selfaffirmation. The individualist wishes to be as independent from organized social structures and governmental institutions and from their influence as possible.

¹⁴² Cf. Individualisme, *Encyclopédie Anarchiste*.

movement – was their approach to revolution. Until then individualism had mainly taken the shape of an attitude of rebellion that revolved around violent acts aimed at stirring the crowds in order to bring about revolutionary insurrection. The idea that revolution could radically transform society and give rise to a libertarian utopia became dismissed as a childish delusion. Individualists began to ridicule faith in the *Grand Soir* as a mystifying belief – a remnant of Christian eschatology. It was based on the hope that universal social harmony was to come in a hypothetical post-revolutionary future and that one was required to surrender one's autonomy to devote oneself to this noble cause. Individualists repudiated propaganda by the deed as reckless and futile; acts of violence came to be regarded as a useless, not to say foolish, sacrifice. As Eugène Renard wrote: 'Les individualistes ... ne croient plus qu'on puisse transformer une société d'un coup de baguette et n'espère plus rien de la propagande par le fait'.⁶⁵ Even if a revolution were to occur, it would only amount to a change in authority that would establish yet another tyrannical regime. A socialist revolution, which would lead to a dictatorship of the proletariat, would never bring about communism. Instead, there would be new heads of parties, new directors of conscience, new despots and oppressors, in a word, new masters.⁶⁶ 'La Révolution victorieuse', stated Armand, 'remplacerait une oppression par une autre'.⁶⁷ As a consequence, many individualists ended up rejecting the concept of revolution altogether: 'Je ne marche pas pour leur Révolution. Je marche contre !' declared Victor Serge.⁶⁸ Faith

⁶⁵ E. Renard, Archive de la Préfecture de police, BA 1498, 3 août 1900.

⁶⁶ E. Armand, *Les ouvriers, les syndicats et les anarchistes*, Veviers, Éditions de Germinal, 1910.

⁶⁷ E. Armand, *Le rôle social du syndicat*, 1911.

⁶⁸ Le Rétif, *Les anarchistes et la transformation sociale, l'anarchie*, n. 252, 3 février 1910. Victor Serge (aka Le Rétif) refers to the revolution envisioned by anarcho-syndicalists.

in revolution, they asserted, was no more than a dangerous illusion.⁶⁹

All individualists converged on the idea that revolution could not change individuals fundamentally. The individual's conscience, their psyche, their deep-seated drives, emotions, morals, and so on cannot change from one day to the next: 'La révolution ne peut [pas] détruire ce qui est le résultat de notre éducation, de nos préjugés, de nos appétits'.⁷⁰ As Armand, Libertad, Mauricius, and de Lazade-Duthiers argued:

L'anarchiste-individualiste se désintéresse d'une révolution violente ayant pour but une transformation du mode de distribution des produits dans le sens collectiviste ou communiste, qui n'amènerait guère de changement dans la mentalité générale et qui ne provoquerait en rien l'émancipation de l'être individuel.⁷¹

Comment instaurer un milieu rationnel et libre avec des individus ignorants et serviles ? L'histoire nous enseigne que toutes les révolutions de ce genre on piteusement avorté. Les peuples, après avoir renversé les régimes qu'ils haïssaient, n'ont-ils pas toujours hissé sur le pavois de nouveaux maîtres, n'ont-ils pas accepté le joug de nouveaux exploiters, – après quelques changements purement superficiels ? La révolution dans les cerveaux doit précéder la révolution dans les institutions.⁷²

⁶⁹ H. Dupont, La Clameur, *La Renaissance*, n. 66, 5 avril 1896.

⁷⁰ G. Butaud, De la possibilité du communisme, *l'anarchie*, 24 août 1911.

⁷¹ E. Armand, *Petit manuel anarchiste individualiste*, Paris, 1911, p. 5. See also See also E. Armand, L'ABC de « nos » revendications individualistes anarchiste, *Supplément à l'en dehors*, 1924, p. 16; *Lettre ouverte aux Travailleurs des Campagnes*, La brochure mensuelle, avril 1930, pp. 18–21.

⁷² A. Libertad, cited in Lorulot 1916, p. 7.

320 entries, including 75 biographical records.¹³⁸ Last but not least, Anne Steiner's research on illegalism and female individualists represents the most comprehensive scholarly work on individualism in the past decade.¹³⁹

Studies of French anarchist individualism in English are even scarcer. They are written by activists rather than scholars. Most worthy of mention are *Enemies of Society: An Anthology of Individualist & Egoist Thought* (2011), which includes several articles by Armand, and *Disruptive Elements, The Extremes of French Anarchism* (2014), which has sections on several individualist figures. One also finds isolated translations of French texts such as Armand's *Individualist Anarchist, Revolutionary Sexualism* (2012). At least half a dozen individualist journals have been published in the English-speaking world since 2010. Most notable amongst these are *My Own* (2012–?) edited by Apio Ludd (aka Feral Faun/Wolff Landstreicher),¹⁴⁰ *Modern Slavery* (2012–2014); *Stand Alone* (2016–present); *Distinctively Dionysian* (2018).¹⁴¹ Individualist anarchism is making a slow yet noteworthy comeback on the anarchist scene in France as well as in English-speaking societies.

¹³⁸ M. Perraud, *Dictionnaire de l'individualisme libertaire*, Paris, Les Éditions libertaires, 2011.

¹³⁹ A. Steiner, Les militantes anarchistes individualistes : des femmes libres à la Belle Époque, *Amnis*, 2008 ; *De l'émancipation des femmes dans les milieux individualistes à la Belle Époque*, *Réfractations*, vol. 24, 2010 ; *Les En-dehors : anarchistes individualistes et illégalistes à la Belle Époque*, Paris, L'Échappée, 2012; *Rirette L'insoumise*, Tulle, Milles sources, 2013; *Vivre l'anarchie ici est maintenant : milieux libres et colonies libertaires à la Belle Époque*, *Cahiers d'histoire*, n. 133, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ *My Own* reproduces a number of French classical individualist texts, such as articles from *L'Endehors* or *La Mêlée* citing Armand, Zo d'Axa, or Han Ryner. The most often cited figures in *My Own* are Stirner and the Italian individualist Renzo Novatore.

¹⁴¹ For a more comprehensive list of individualist journals, see <https://www.unionofegoists.com/>

the past twenty years,¹³³ some of which have even been translated into English.¹³⁴ Several biographies of prominent individualists were published recently.¹³⁵ A few collections of individualist brochures and short texts were also re-printed in the past ten years such as Perrine Gambart and Hugues Lenoir's *Les anarchistes individualistes et l'éducation* (2015). Various contemporary introductions to anarchism, such as Irène Pereira's *Anarchistes* (2009), present individualism as one of the three main branches of the movement (along with anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism).¹³⁶ A colloquium on Han Ryner was held at *Centre International de Recherche sur l'Anarchisme* (CIRA) in the autumn of 2002.¹³⁷ Michel Perraudeau edited a dictionary of libertarian individualism, which was published in 2011 and is composed of

¹³³ G. Palante, *Combat pour l'individu*, Le Housset, Folle Avoine, 2003 [1904]; A. Lorulot, *Pourquoi je suis athée !*, Paris, Les Éditions libertaires, 2005 [1933]; B. A. d'Axa (ed.), *Zo d'Axa, L'Endehors*, Paris, Plein Chant, 2006; A. Libertad, *Le culte de la charogne*, Paris, Agone, 2006 [1897–1908]; E. Armand, *La révolution sexuelle et la camaraderie amoureuse*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009 [1934]; H. Ryner, *Petit manuel individualiste*, Paris, Allia, 2010 [1903]; G. Palante, *Anarchisme et individualisme*, Paris, La République des lettres, 2012 [1909]; A. Libertad, *Et que crève le vieux monde*, Paris, Mutines Séditions, 2013 [1897–1908]; E. Armand, *L'initiation individualiste anarchiste*, Paris, La lenteur et le Ravin bleu, 2014 [1923]; Zo d'Axa, *De Mazas à Jérusalem*, Paris, Mutines Séditions, 2015 [1895]; O. Mirbeau, *Écrits politiques*, Paris, L'Herne, 2017; H. Ryner, *Petit manifeste individualiste*, Paris, La République des lettres, 2017 [1905]; V. Serge, *Essai critique sur Nietzsche*, Paris, nada éditions, 2018 [1917].

¹³⁴ M. Devaldès, *Power Pleasure and Self-Interest*, London Routledge, 2016.

¹³⁵ E.g. W. Badier, *Émile Henry*, Paris, Les Éditions libertaires, 2007; A. Steiner, *Rirette l'insoumise*, Paris, Milles sources, 2013; J-J. Lefrère & P. Oriol, *La feuille qui ne tremblait pas : Zo d'Axa et l'anarchie*, Paris, Flammarion, 2013; L. Marin, *Rirette Maîtrejean : Attentatskritikerin, Anarchafeministin, Individualanarchistin*, Graswurzelrevolution, 2016; A. Leduc, *Octave Mirbeau*, Paris, Les Éditions libertaires, 2017.

¹³⁶ I. Pereira, *Anarchistes*, Paris, La ville brûle, 2009.

¹³⁷ *Actes du colloque Han Ryner*, Marseille, septembre 2002, Le centre international de recherches sur l'anarchisme, 2003.

Nous ne croyons pas transformer le milieu par un seul coup de force, nous laissons cette idée aux révolutionnaires furibonds aveuglés d'illusions et d'espoirs chimériques, nous voulons en former un autre dans le sein même de la société actuelle. Nous voulons former des éléments capables de vivre en anarchistes, hors la loi, hors l'autorité, hors la morale ... Notre activité est un travail de désagrégation lente ... ce sont seules les causes lentes et persistantes qui produisent des effets durables et profond ... nous allons dans la vie, en lutte perpétuelle, constante, contre tous les préjugés, débarrassant ... nos cerveaux de toutes les scories qui les encombrant, grossissant perpétuellement le noyau des conscients.⁷³

Réalise-toi toi-même, ce qui vaut mieux que d'attendre ton salut de « réalisations » sociales plus ou moins éloignées qui ne sont jamais que des réalisations incomplètes, car elles ne visent qu'à l'amélioration matérielle de l'individu sans son amélioration morale, le laissant esclave de ses préjugés et de ses vices.⁷⁴

Instead understanding revolution as a single cataclysmic event, individualists advocated for permanent acts of personal revolt. As Libertad declared: 'La destruction sociale est faite de destructions partielles. On ne décrète pas la conscience sociale, on la forme tous les jours ... une vie anarchiste est une vie de réactions constantes.'⁷⁵ This daily struggle was to begin with revolt against all forms of oppression (internal as well as external): 'Le véritable révolutionnaire est celui dont tous

⁷³ Mauricius 1907, p. 17.

⁷⁴ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *Les Vagabonds*, n. 4, septembre 1922.

⁷⁵ A. Libertad, *Le Travail antisocial et les mouvements utiles*, Paris, Éd. de l'anarchie, 1909.

les actes contribuent à jeter continuellement le désordre dans le milieu et à désagréer'.⁷⁶ Individualists advocated ongoing revolt through personal transformation: 'Après avoir été partisans d'idées destructrices, ils ont appris, compris et admis que le meilleur moyen de transformer la société, c'est de commencer par la réforme de l'individu.'⁷⁷ As Mauricius concisely put it:

Notre activité est précise : c'est la lutte ... contre l'ignorance, contre le préjugé.

Notre but est clair : grossir le nombre des conscients, des anarchistes.

Nos moyens sont nombreux : la parole, l'écrit et surtout l'exemple.⁷⁸

Sa vie toute entière sera le reflet de ses idées, il ne votera pas, il ne se mariera pas, il rira des convenances, il ne saluera pas la charogne qui passe, ou la loque tricolore qui flotte et il expliquera pourquoi. Incapable de subir l'autorité, il ne l'exercera, il laissera sa compagne libre de son corps, de ses sentiments et de ses actes, il ne veillera pas sur la vertu de sa sœur, il éduquera ses enfants de manière rationnelle, il agira à sa guise, à sa fantaisie, il se moquera de l'opinion publique.⁷⁹

J'ai la conviction profonde qu'aucun progrès humain n'a pu et ne pourra s'accomplir qu'autant que les hommes ont rejeté et rejetteront les morales courantes, les dogmes, les préjugés, les

⁷⁶ A. Lorulot, Entretiens anarchistes, *l'anarchie*, 26 octobre 1905.

⁷⁷ *La Revue Naturiste*, septembre 1922.

⁷⁸ Mauricius 1907, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

Cela s'adresse à ceux/celles qui sentent ne faire partie d'aucun milieu, d'aucun mouvement, aucun groupe, qui ne représentent aucun courant et se positionnent volontairement dans la marge ... Le but est de susciter des réflexions, des débats, des échanges, hors de tout cadre idéologique, sectaire, boutiquier, Politique ; mais aussi d'assumer les désaccords, les contradictions dans lesquelles nous baignons toutes et tous.¹²⁹

There are several anarchist libraries and self-managed spaces in Paris that embrace individualism.

Most notable amongst these is the *Bibliothèque anarchiste Libertad*, which was founded in 2010 in Belleville and is still operational today.¹³⁰ A second openly individualist library worthy of mention is *La Discordia*, which opened in 2015 and closed two years later because of internal conflict. It was replaced by another library – *Les fleurs arctiques : Une bibliothèque pour la révolution*¹³¹ – that kept the same location in the 19th arrondissement, but which welcomes a broader range of libertarians, including some sympathizers to the cause.¹³²

Academic studies of French anarcho-individualism, past and present, remain rare. To the best of my knowledge, there is, at the time of writing (2018–2021), no major piece of scholarship on the subject written in English and no comprehensive study published in French. Nevertheless, several classical individualist texts have been re-edited over

¹²⁹ Diomedea, Prémambule, *Hérésie*.

¹³⁰ [[<https://bibliothequelibertad.noblogs.org/>]]

¹³¹ [[<https://lesfleursarctiques.noblogs.org/>]]

¹³² 'Les Fleurs Arctiques ne sont pas une organisation ou un groupe politique, mais un rassemblement hétérogène et protéiforme qui tient à son hétérogénéité'. https://lesfleursarctiques.noblogs.org/?page_id=22

iv. Individualism Today (1999–2021)

Since the early 2000s, one can find pockets of resurgence of an individualist tradition that distinguishes itself from and is critical of the rest of the anarchism in France. An online version of the newspaper *L'Endehors* (originally founded by Zo d'Axa (1891–1893) and re-established by E. Armand (1922–1939)) was launched in the spring of 2002.¹²⁴ Its charter is an extract from a 1953 article taken from Armand's journal *L'Unique* (1945–1956).¹²⁵ Its emphatically individualist opening sentence reads as follows: 'Que « s'occuper de ses propres affaires » soit le seul code moral qu'implique pour l'individu le sens an-archiste de la vie, c'est ce dont aucun individualiste ne saurait douter'.¹²⁶ Various other Francophone individualist online journals, blogs, and documentaries and have seen the light of day in the past two decades.¹²⁷ Several individualists fanzines have also been produced such as Aviv Etrebilal's *Notre individualisme et autres textes* (2015), *Hérésie* (2017, 2018), or Rosa Blat's *Mon Anarchisme* (2018).¹²⁸ In a statement that strongly echoes Zo d'Axa, Armand, and other figureheads of classical individualism, Diomedea, the editor of *Hérésie*, describes the aspirations of her brochure as follows:

¹²⁴ <http://endehors.net/>

¹²⁵ E. Armand, *L'Unique*, n. 79–80, Décembre 1953–janvier 1954

¹²⁶ [[<http://endehors.net/texts/charte-en-dehors>]

¹²⁷ <https://ravageeditions.noblogs.org/>

<http://endehors.net/> <http://non-fides.fr/>

<https://diomedea.noblogs.org/> (2016)

[https://quecreve.noblogs.org/\(2019\)](https://quecreve.noblogs.org/(2019)). See the documentary-film *Vivre l'anarchie*, Michel Mathurin.

¹²⁸ A. Etrebilal, *Notre individualisme et autres textes*, Paris, Ravages Éditions, 2011; P. Gambart & H. Lenoir, *Les anarchistes individualistes et l'éducation (1900–1914)*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 2015. French individualist texts translated into English have also been published in recent fanzines. See, for example, Off the Leach, Dark Matter Publications, 2012.

principes établis, en un mot tout ce qui constitue le principe d'Autorité.⁸⁰

Similarly Libertad stated:

L'ennemi le plus âpre à combattre est en toi, il est ancré en ton cerveau. Il est un, mais il a divers masques : il est le préjugé Propriété. Il s'appelle l'Autorité, la sainte bastille Autorité devant laquelle se plient tous les corps et tous les cerveaux.⁸¹

And Rimbault:

Travailler à la régénération de l'individu pour l'amener à la perfection de son être et du milieu, voilà le seul acte révolutionnaire qui compte.⁸²

Society cannot truly change until individuals themselves change. This transformation had to take place in the here and now, *ici et maintenant*: 'L'individualiste s'intéresse surtout au présent, il veut vivre dès maintenant et sait combien sont vaines les prophéties dont les hommes futurs ne tiendront sans doute aucun compte.'⁸³ Hence individualists turned their backs on their once-sacrosanct revolutionary aspirations in favour of immediate individual emancipation and personal regeneration:

L'illusion néfaste c'est la croyance en la révolution rédemptrice alors qu'il ne peut y avoir d'autre rédemption que celle de la personnalité humaine, alors qu'on ne peut rien construire sans avoir fait des hommes meilleurs et plus forts.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Mauricius, *L'apologie du crime*, Paris, Éd. des causeries populaires, 1912, p. 3.

⁸¹ Libertad, *l'anarchie*, 12 juillet 1906.

⁸² L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 16, février 1924.

⁸³ A. Lorulot, *L'Individualisme-Anarchiste et le Communisme*, Ro-mainville, Éd. de l'Idée libre, 1911.

⁸⁴ Le Rétif, Réponse à Méric, *l'anarchie*, 28 avril 1910.

Moral perfectionism was at the heart of this new individualist endeavour: 'Pour agir efficacement, il faut s'attacher à la cause : modifier l'individu, le perfectionner'.⁸⁵

Une nouvelle conception plus réelle de l'anarchie s'est faite jour ; la secte des individualistes ou véritables anarchistes s'est constituée. Ces anarchistes ne sont pas communistes et ne sont pas, non plus révolutionnaires, du moins au sens ancien du mot. Ils veulent seulement que chacun, au lieu de lutter pour les autres, pour la société, pour l'humanité, etc, lutte pour lui seul et qu'au lieu de se sacrifier, il améliore son sort et par tous les moyens.⁸⁶

Education took centre stage in the individualist project. Insofar as education constituted the primary stage on the path to emancipation it was viewed as the most urgent need. As Rirette Maîtrejean⁸⁷ wrote: 'C'est là une des questions les plus importantes pour nous actuellement, la régénération par l'éducation rationnelle des hommes à venir'.⁸⁸ Some even considered the moral betterment of the masses and the creation of conscious individuals to be the only effective way to ensure personal and social growth. As Victor Serge claimed: 'La seule œuvre sérieuse en matière d'évolution sociale, c'est ... le

⁸⁵ G. Deherme, *La Question Sociale*, *La Renaissance*, n. 66, 5 avril 1896.

⁸⁶ E. Renard, Archives de la Préfecture de police, BA 1498, 3 août 1900.

⁸⁷ Rirette Maîtrejean was born in Saint-Mexant (Corrèze). Her father was peasant who later worked as a stonemason. She emigrated to Paris in 1904, age 17, and began frequenting individualist circles in 1905. She married the anarchist saddler Louis Maîtrejean in 1906 with whom she had a child called Maud. In 1908 she began a relationship with Mauricius. Together, they directed *l'anarchie* in 1909. In 1911 she moved with her new partner Victor Kibaltchiche to headquarters of *l'anarchie* in Romainville, which had become an individualist urban colony. In 1914 she published her memoirs, *Souvenirs d'anarchie*, in which she recounted her experience of the anarchist individualist milieu. She died in June 1968.

⁸⁸ R. Maîtrejean, *l'anarchie*, n. 228, 19 août 1909.

Individualist concerns were back on the agenda with the social movements of the late sixties. Historically individualist themes weaving together the personal and political re-emerged, such as the rejection of marriage, of the nuclear family, of patriarchy, of militarism, of consumerism and the promotion of free love, free education, and vegetarianism. Although two individualist journals were briefly published in 1968,¹¹⁹ the tradition was virtually unknown by students and workers at the time, even by those who identified as anarchists.¹²⁰ As Anne Steiner writes, the actors of the uprisings of May 1968 were in many ways new individualist – 'de nouveaux en-dehors' – linked to classical anarcho-individualism by an invisible common thread: 'Au fameux *vivre sa vie* des individualistes, répondaient le *jouir sans entraves* des libertaires de mai'.¹²¹ There does not seem to be any explicitly individualist activity in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, no individualist journals were published during that period. Writing in the early 1970s the anarcho-syndicalist historian and activist Gaston Leval asserted that the individualist tradition had disappeared.¹²² A little over a decade later Manfredonia argued that, with the exception of Stirnerism, individualism had died out with the disappearance of the last generation of individualists in the 1960s: 'Aujourd'hui [1984] aucun militant en vue du mouvement anarchiste de s'en reclame explicitement'.¹²³ This has changed in the past twenty years with the rise of alter-globalization movements.

¹¹⁹ *Moi*(Marseille, 1968); *Ego* (Marseille 1968–1971). A Francophone journal was published in Quebec in the 1970s, namely *La Feuille* (Montréal 1974–1975). In France no other individualist journal was published in the 1970s and 1980s and only two in the 1990s, namely *L'Unique* (Toulouse 1991) and *L'Amourtaire* (Nice, 1995–1997).

¹²⁰ E.g. Dan, *Primauté et Liberté de l'Individu*, Paris, La ruche ouvrière, 1968.

¹²¹ Steiner 2008, pp. 205–6.

¹²² G. Leval, *Anarchici e anarchia*, Turin, Einaudi, 1971, p. 593.

¹²³ Manfredonia 1984, p. 394.

ou inspiré, religieux ou social. – Répudiation de l’occultisme, du surnaturel, etc. – La bienveillance, la sensibilité, l’esprit de compréhension et de conciliation, la lutte contre le « tant pis pour toi » facteurs de vitalité intérieure. – Pratique du « balayer d’abord devant sa porte » avant de s’occuper des affaires d’autrui. – Intérêt aux milieux libres, villages individualistes, écoles libertaires. – Familles d’élection, pluralisme des affections et des amitiés, exclusif des préférences et des privilèges. – Compréhensivité à l’égard des non-conformistes, hors-série, irréguliers, etc. – Au cas d’attention spéciale dans un sens quelconque, celle-ci joue incontestablement en faveur de qui a enduré davantage à cause de la diffusion ou de la réalisation de l’une ou l’autre ou plusieurs des tendances ci-dessus. – Possibilité de réalisation, tout au moins partielle, des parties constructives de cet exposé par l’action de la volonté persévérante. – Etc., etc.¹¹⁶

The decline of individualism in the interwar period and especially after 1939 reflects that of the broader anarchist movement, which had little impact upon social struggles until the late 1960s.¹¹⁷ With the death of Armand and of his contemporaries, individualism became moribund. No individualist periodical was published between 1956 and 1968. André Arru introduced the work of Armand and Stirner to new generations of anarchists in the 1960s.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ E. Armand, Principales tendances de « l’Unique » et des « Individualistes à sa façon », *Supplément à l’Unique*, n. 111–2, novembre 1956.

¹¹⁷ T. Ibañez, *À contretemps*, n. 39, janvier 2011. Cf. T. Ibañez, Pourquoi j’ai choisi l’anarchie ?, *Bulletin des Jeunes Libertaires*, n. 42, 1962.

¹¹⁸ S. Knoerr-Saulière & F. Kaigre (eds.), *Jean-René Saulière dit André Arru*, Marseille, Libre Pensée Autonome, 2004.

travail d’éducation. Faire des hommes nouveaux, qui sachent voir clair à travers la brume des faussetés conventionnelles’.⁸⁹ Various alternative pedagogical enterprises – *Universités populaires, écoles libres*, and later *causeries populaires* – saw the light of day. The common thread across these educationist endeavours was the belief that it was the immediate improvement of individual men and women that was to bring about a better society, rather than revolutions or social reforms. Though some individualists still talked of propaganda by the deed, it had a very different content: books and debates had by and large replaced bombs and swindles. At the dawn of the early twentieth century virtually all anarchists saw individual emancipation through education as the steppingstone to social revolution. Alongside other anarchists such as Sebastian Faure or Francisco Ferrer in Spain, Individualists were at the forefront of this educationist trend.

Practices of self-transformation were the corollary of education. One’s capacity for selftransformation was thought to be coterminous with one’s degree of self- and social awareness. Selftransformation came to be seen as the new paradigm of revolt:

Dans notre doctrine individualiste, pas de violence : ni révolution, ni bulletin de vote. Nos moyens d’actions sont : L’étude, la persuasion, l’exemple, et tout d’abord *la réforme individuelle*.⁹⁰

Il peut sembler aux esprits superficiels que cette nouvelle forme délaisse la lutte ... parce que, lasse de s’attaquer à des entités (états, société, bourgeoisie), *elle s’attaque aux individus, essayant de les transformer, de les révolutionner ...* Nous

⁸⁹ Le Rétif, Les anarchistes et la transformation sociale, *l’anarchie*, n. 252, 3 février 1910.

⁹⁰ S. Zaïkowska, Victor Lorenc et sa contribution au naturisme, *Le Végétalien*, 1929.

nous appliquons à vivre ce que nous croyons être bons, à formuler ce que nous vivons. Sûr que c'est là la véritable lutte.⁹¹

In summation, individualism became a total way of life – an anarchist *ascesis* – revolving around permanent revolt centred upon practices of self-transformation. Individualists demanded an existential revolution – one which was not limited to the political realm, but which encompassed all dimensions of life, be it economic, ethical, aesthetic, psychosomatic, or sexual. It should not come as a surprise that great individualist figures such as Zo d'Axa, Libertad, or Han Ryner⁹² were compared to Diogenes the Cynic who disregarded authority, customs, and manners. As Anna Mahé and Libertad, who embodied this vision of permanent revolt, stated:

Notre vie est une insulte pour les faibles et les menteurs qui se targuent d'une idée qu'ils ne mettent jamais en pratique. Ceux qui se marient, qui se syndiquent et qui votent ; ceux qui ont toutes les tares des imbéciles qui les entourent, qui jouent, fument, se morphinent, s'alcoolisent ; ceux qui suivent les masses incapables de réagir contre les us et coutumes ... tous ces troupeaux nous conspuent et nous jettent la pierre. Nous n'avons même pas le respect des morts.⁹³

This constituted the final crucial turning point in the individualist enterprise. Instead of a socially oriented individualism of violent action, one now witnesses the emergence

⁹¹ Libertad, *Le Libertaire*, 21 juillet 1902. Emphasis added.

⁹² Han Ryner (Henri Nez) was born in Nemours, Algeria. His father was a postmaster and his mother a teacher. He was a schoolteacher, an author, and a freemason. He was one of the main individualist contributors to the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

⁹³ A. Mahé and A. Libertad, *Aux anarchistes, l'anarchie*, n. 105, avril 1907

social. – Négation de l'utilité de l'intervention de l'État ou de l'immixtion de toute institution gouvernementale dans les rapports ou les accords entre individus raisonnables. – Développement de l'esprit critique et d'initiative dans l'éducation individuelle. – La vie comme volonté et responsabilité. – La violence (dominisme, imposition, exploitation, etc.), brutalité, usage de la force physique ou des armes, etc. comme source des maux qui accablent l'individu. – La réciprocité comme éthique de la sociabilité. – Élimination de la souffrance dans les rapports conditionnés par l'amitié et la camaraderie. – Fidélité à la parole donnée et aux clauses des pactes librement consentis, et ce dans tous les domaines. – Associationisme, coopératisme, mutuellisme volontaires et contractuels dans toutes les branches de l'activité humaine, mais garantie pour l'Isolé d'évolution en marge du groupe ou de toute organisation. – Libération des préjugés concernant la race, l'apparence extérieure, l'inégalité des sexes, la condition sociale, l'âge, etc. – La vie personnelle comme une œuvre d'art. – Le non-empiétement sur le rayon d'activité d'autrui comme limite de l'expansion de la personnalité. – Eugénisme raisonné et Naturisme réfléchi. – Éducation sexuelle intégrale, mais combat contre la prostitution et la pornographie sous toutes leurs formes, et dénonciation de l'idée de la femme considérée comme une « proie », une simple « nécessité physiologique » ou de la « chair à plaisir ». – Maîtrise de soi, mais non renoncement à la joie de vivre. – Le présentisme comme antidote contre les chimères du Messianisme, du société-futurisme, etc. – Refus du dogme révélé

and readers of *l'Insurgé* and *l'En dehors*. Armand was the editor of the main individualist journals published from 1915 to 1956, namely *Pendant la Mêlée* (1915–1916), later known as *Par-delà la Mêlée* (1916–1918), *La Mêlée* (1918–1920), *L'Un* (1920), *L'En dehors* (1922–1939),¹¹⁴ and *L'Unique* (1945–1956). He also published an individualist handbook, *L'Initiation individualiste anarchiste*, in 1923, which was intended to be a compendium of anarchist individualist theory and practice. Armand gradually imposed his version of the tradition, which was primarily a conglomerate of ideas that had been articulated before the war combined with American (Warren, Tucker) and German (Stirner, Mackay) thinkers.¹¹⁵

Armand's individualism was primarily an intellectual and existential attitude of individual protest with little actual social outreach and active political engagement. The tradition became somewhat fossilized and doctrinal. Gradually more theoretical, it turned into an ideology that was sometimes a far cry from the multiplicity of practices that flourished prior to the war. It lost many of its core tenets and became gradually more reduced to Stirnerianism. Individualists no longer sought to destroy sources of oppression or to withdraw from society to create alternative social structures, but chose to make do with the established order whilst trying to keep themselves aloof from "archism". Armand nonetheless put forth the most comprehensive and theoretically sophisticated account of individualism. In 1956, the last year of publication of his last journal, Armand, age 84, provided an ultimate portrayal of individualist anarchism, which is worth quoting in full:

La souveraineté de l'individu comme principe
fondamental de toute revendication d'ordre

¹¹⁴ *L'En dehors* had almost 500 subscribers in its first year of publication and a print run of 6,000 copies in 1930.

¹¹⁵ E. Armand, *Individualisme (Anarchisme individualiste)*, *Encyclopédie Anarchiste*.

of a more theoretically refined and embodied individualism grounded in the idea of personal emancipation. Individualists no longer simply envisioned a society with no government, no institutionalized power, and no unjustified authority. They also sought to strive towards individual emancipation in the ordinary here and now by rejecting the authority that permeates both society and the inner self. 'Une nouvelle conception plus réelle de l'anarchie s'est faite jour' declared Renard.⁹⁴ This new conception of the anarchist endeavour had the effect of widening the gap between libertarian socialists and individualist anarchists. Individualists no longer sought to ground the origins of anarchism exclusively within socialism. Individualists' understanding of anarchism became broader than a mere political movement or social doctrine. It had turned into an ethical conception of the human being engaged in a perpetual struggle against domination, hierarchy, and authority. The aim was to work towards the creation of a new type of individual *sans dieu ni maître*, a new anarchist species, *l'individu conscient*.

The ultimate stage in the marginalization of individualists was their official excommunication from the libertarian movement. A general congress was held in Paris in August 1913 that resulted in the foundation of the first French anarchist federation. Participants came mainly from mainstream anarchist journals such as *Le Libertaire* or *Les temps nouveaux* as well as from the Parisian *Fédération Communiste Anarchiste*. Individualists were not invited, despite the willingness to collaborate that some of them had shown.⁹⁵ In fact, there was strong opposition to their participation. This categorical exclusion led individualists to condemn the congress. They described it as 'une manifestation forcement autoritaire anti-anarchiste

⁹⁴ E. Renard, , Archives de la Préfecture de police, Paris, BA 1498, 3 août 1900.

⁹⁵ For example, Mauricius wished to put forward the individualist perspective in the congress.

par conséquence⁹⁶ and as a ‘bouffonnerie’ or a ‘réunion de vipérins ... de vulgaires poticheurs’.⁹⁷ Yet their protestation and criticisms did not prevent the congress from fulfilling the purpose for which it was convened: it gave rise to the first national anarchist association,⁹⁸ namely the *Fédération communiste-anarchiste-révolutionnaire*. This had the consequence of creating a radical – and now official – split between members of the federation and those who were excluded from it. Alongside deviant strands such as illegalism or scientism, individualism was vehemently dismissed as not forming part of anarchism. ‘On a rompu bruyamment avec les individualistes’ wrote Armand.⁹⁹ On the day following the congress a poster, explicitly entitled “*Nous répudions l’individualisme*”, was produced by the newly founded organisation. It read:

Le congrès a nettement séparé le mouvement communiste révolutionnaire anarchiste des théories erronées des pratiques décevantes de l’individualisme. Jamais il ne put y avoir, il n’y eut la moindre solidarité entre le communisme révolutionnaire anarchiste et l’individualisme. Toujours profonds, inéluctables furent les antagonismes qui les opposent.

Overtly and harshly disowned by the newly established anarchist federation, individualism was once and for all deemed dangerous, deviant, and incompatible with the libertarian movement.

In conclusion, this broad sweep of the historical developments of individualism has shown that the tradition emerged

⁹⁶ Lorulot, *L’idée libre*, n. 23, octobre 1913.

⁹⁷ *L’action d’art*, n. 11, 25 Aug. 1913. Cf. *La vie anarchiste*, n. 11, 5 septembre 1913.

⁹⁸ Note that anarchists preferred to use the term “*association*” over “*organisation*” to refer to cooperative group action.

⁹⁹ E. Armand, *les Réfractaires*, juillet-août 1913.

Duthiers¹¹⁰ were the two main individualist contributors to the Encyclopaedia, followed by Han Ryner and Ixigrec.¹¹¹ It shows who were the principal individualist writers at the time and presents a mature form of individualism that was integrated into the broad libertarian movement.

From 1914 on, the figureheads of individualism dispersed with the notable exception of Armand who kept publishing individualist works with the collaboration of Pierre Chardon¹¹² during the First World War. From the 1920s onwards Armand became the leading proponent and theoretician of individualism. He contributed to nearly all of the dozen individualist journals that were published during the interwar period.¹¹³ Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers also remained active until the 1950s. He directed the *Bibliothèque de l’aristocratie* from 1930 to 1952. Colomer and Armand organized weekly meetings for friends

¹¹⁰ Lacaze-Duthiers was born in Bordeaux to a noble family. He was a literature professor, man of letters, art critic, and pacifist militant. He wrote profusely for the anarchist press, especially in Armand’s periodicals. He contributed to the foundation of various journals, in particular Lorulot’s *L’idée Libre* (1911) and André Colomer’s *L’Action d’Art* (1914). He collaborated to the *Néo-Naturien*. In 1931 he created the *Bibliothèque de l’aristocratie* and took as his motto: ‘Fais de ta vie une oeuvre d’art’. He was one of the main individualist propagandists during the interwar period alongside E. Armand.

¹¹¹ Armand wrote at least 86 entries in the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*; de Lacaze-Duthiers (28); Han Ryner (25); Ixigrec (25).

¹¹² Pierre Chardon (Maurice Charron) was born in the Indre region (South-West of Paris) in 1892 to a working-class family. He was a key collaborator to his close friend Armand’s journals hors du troupeau, *Les Réfractaires*, par delà la mêlée and *La Mêlée*. He was married to a teacher by the name of Jeanne Lemoine who helped him until his untimely death from the Spanish flu in 1919, age 27. See Pierre Chardon, *Sa vie, son action, sa pensée*, Paris, Éd. de l’en dehors, 1928.

¹¹³ *Les Vagabonds individualistes libertaires* (Lyon, 1916–1922; 1922–1924), later called *Lueurs* (Lyon, 1924–1925), *Le Sphinx d’après-guerre*, later known as *Le Sphinx naturien*, *Le Sphinx de Brest*, *Le Sphinx poétique, philosophique et satirique*, *Le Sphinx littéraire de Brest* (Brest, 1919–1938); *Cahiers (individualistes) de philosophie et d’art* (Paris 1920–1921); *L’Ordre naturel* (Paris, 1920–1922); *Le Réveil de l’esclave* (Pierrefitte 1920–1925); *Lucifer* (Bordeaux 1929–1931, 1934–1935).

pour se combiner et former une sorte de synthèse anarchiste.¹⁰⁵

Voline was another key proponent of the anarchist synthesis. He criticized the different strands of anarchism for asserting their strategy as the only efficient one. On his view, social revolution is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a diversity of tactics. Different means suit different ends. It makes little sense to discuss a tactic without having a goal in mind. Anarchists will always deploy a diversity of tactics to fight against the multifarious systems of oppression and structures of exploitation. Tactics should be as diverse as domination is diffuse. All manifestations of anarchism, he concluded, contain an element of truth. He praised individualism for advocating the cultivation of one's personality, moral growth, and non-violence.¹⁰⁶

This anarchist synthesis is perhaps best captured by Faure's *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, a 2,893-page work published in four volumes between 1925 and 1934.¹⁰⁷ The Encyclopaedia was intended to include the different branches of the movement: '[L]Encyclopédie est] destinée à réunir et à exposer, aussi complètement que possible, les principes, les tendances, le but et les méthodes de l'Anarchisme'.¹⁰⁸ It gave individualism a central place: some articles provide specifically individualist definitions and perspectives.¹⁰⁹ Armand and de Lacaze-

¹⁰⁵ S. Faure, *La Synthèse anarchiste*, *La Voix libertaire*, n. 1, 1 mai 1928.

¹⁰⁶ S. Faure, *La Synthèse anarchiste*, *La Voix libertaire*, n. 1, 1 mai 1928.

¹⁰⁷ The *Encyclopédie anarchiste* contains over 1,600 entries. It remains the longest work produced by the anarchist movement in France. Five volumes were initially planned. Only the first one, composed of four books, was completed. The initial project was aborted due to Faure's death in 1942. S. Faure (ed.), *L'Encyclopédie anarchiste*, Limoges, E. Rivet, 1934. The *Encyclopédie anarchiste* was digitalised by members of the *Fédération anarchiste* in 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Plan général de l'Encyclopédie anarchiste, S. Faure (ed.), *L'Encyclopédie anarchiste*, Limoges, E. Rivet, 1934.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

and evolved primarily in opposition to the mainstream libertarian movement. Individualists were staunchly *anti-syndicalistes* and *anti-ouvrieristes*. Individualism constituted an alternative interpretation and manifestation of anarchism. A broad distinction can be made between two main waves of individualism.¹⁰⁰ First, during the fin-de-siècle most individualists rejected syndicalism and kept on promoting propaganda by the deed as an offensive and violent tactic. Second, at the dawn of the twentieth century most individualists abandoned all revolutionary aspirations and focused upon self-transformation and the creation of alternative social structures on the margins of society. Individualists' constant criticism and hostility towards mainstream anarchists led to their excommunication from the first national French anarchist association on the eve of the First World War.

iii. Later Evolution (1914–1999)

The First World War prompted individualists and other anarchists to set aside their disagreements and to collaborate. Mainstream anarchists and individualists worked hand in hand in the struggle against the war. This redefined the division amongst anarchists in the years to come as between those who joined the *Union sacrée* and those who remained true to internationalist principles. Individualists condemned the war en masse. Some such as Devaldès and Colomer deserted; others, such as Lorulot, Han Ryner, and Armand took part in anti-militarist propaganda and advocated pacifism.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ This is a broad historical overview of individualism, which was more chronologically ramified than sketched out here. See Manfredonia (1984) for a more detailed analysis of the history of anarcho-individualism.

¹⁰¹ Armand co-founded the "Ligue Antimilitariste" in 1902 with Georges Yvetot, Henri Beylie, Paraf-Javal, Albert Libertad and Émile Janvion. Many anarchists and individualists were condemned for their pacifist activities. Louis Lecoïn spent five years in prison for desertion; Georges Cochon, three

The coming together of libertarian socialists and anarcho-individualists can be illustrated by Colomber – an individualist aesthete, poet, and bandit, cofounder of *l'Action d'art* and contributor to *l'anarchie* who became a syndicalist then an anarcho-communist and the editor of the mainstream anarchist journal *Le Libertaire* in 1922. He edited a weekly periodical, *L'Insurgé*, subtitled *Journal d'action révolutionnaire et de culture individualiste*, from May 1925 to July 1926.¹⁰² Its explicit goal was to harmonize individualism with other strands of anarchism:

L' « Insurgé » ne prétend donc remplacer aucun autre journal, pas plus l' « En dehors » que le « Libertaire ». Il se met fraternellement aux côtés de l'un et de l'autre, afin de compléter, par ses accords personnels, l'harmonie anarchiste, qui doit demeurer une bonne harmonie.¹⁰³

The Great War showed commonalities between anarchists and individualists could prevail, and that collaboration was possible and fruitful.¹⁰⁴ This alliance reached its climax at the end of the 1920s when Sebastien Faure proposed to establish an anarchist organization that would include all

years for the same reason; Pierre Ruff, 15 months for handing out pacifist leaflets; Armand, five years for complicity in desertion.

¹⁰² A couple of months after its launch, *l'Insurgé* had 5,000 readers, *L'Insurgé*, n. 12, 25 juillet 1925.

¹⁰³ A. Colomber, Ce que « l'Insurgé » veut être, *L'Insurgé*, n. 1, 7 mai 1925.

¹⁰⁴ The Russian Revolution also united anarchists and individualists. They both began celebrating the revolution then deplored the new Soviet regime. It is worth noting that some anarchist wanted to keep traditions of libertarian socialism and individualist anarchism distinct. For example, Pierre Chardon wrote: 'J'estime que les communistes anarchistes et les anarchistes individualistes ne doivent point fusionner leurs conceptions, qui correspondent à des tempéraments différents, et à des façons de sentir et de penser qui souvent s'excluent irrémédiablement. See P. Chardon, *La Mêlée*, n. 17, 1918.

schools of thought that identified with libertarian ideas. Though individualism continued to be criticized, it came to have accepted place within the anarchist movement.

At the time anarchists were divided between those in favour of platformism and those in favour of synthetism. The former wanted to distance themselves from individualism and other subcultures on the fringes of the movement whereas the latter wanted to bring together what they thought to be the three main currents of anarchism, namely communism, syndicalism, and individualism. Faure claimed that petty internal quarrels kept anarchists divided. The three main branches of anarchism wasted time caricaturing and disparaging one another instead of joining forces against their common authoritarian enemies. Faure campaigned for an 'anarchist synthesis', by which he meant the practical and ideological unification of the movement, that is, the association of all those who identified with anarchism as well as a fusion or harmonious cohabitation of libertarian theories:

Ces trois courants : anarcho-syndicalisme, communisme-libertaire et individualisme-anarchiste, courants distincts, mais non contradictoires, n'ont rien qui les rend inconciliables, rien qui les oppose essentiellement, fondamentalement, rien qui proclame leur incompatibilité, rien qui les empêche de vivre en bonne intelligence, voire de se concerter en vue d'une propagande et d'une action communes ... Chacun de ces courants a sa place marquée, son rôle, sa mission au sein du mouvement social large et profond qui, sous le nom de « l'Anarchisme », a pour but l'instauration d'un milieu social qui assurera à tous et à chacun le maximum de bien-être et de liberté ... Anarchosyndicaliste, communiste-libertaire et individualiste-anarchiste sont faits

soit beau' ; 'qu'importe la mort de vagues d'humanité, si , par elle, s'affirme l'individu'.¹³⁵ In a similar vein, Zo d'Axa, once described as 'cet aristocrate [qui] considère la morale comme un chapitre de l'esthétique et ne consent qu'à agir en beauté',¹³⁶ stated : 'une caserne qui saute, c'est un assez joli symbole'.¹³⁷ Indeed, for artists, the problem was, at bottom, not social but aesthetic: 'L'engouement littéraire pour l'altruisme actif naquit d'une considération purement esthétique. L'inharmonie du monde moral choque comme une faute d'art'.¹³⁸ Hence, their aim was not to destroy or to improve the social order as such, but rather to rid the world of its ugliness and to allow for the emancipation of a handful of artistic souls that would render life more beautiful. It is the beauty of the act or that which it symbolized that mattered to them above all else: 'Il n'y a pas d'affirmation de la liberté individuelle plus héroïque que celle-ci : créer ... une forme nouvelle de beauté'.¹³⁹ Artists had a mystical approach to art ; anarchy, to them, represented a beautiful utopia: 'Tous ... rêvent d'un temps meilleur, d'une cite plus humaine, où ne fument d'autres autels que ceux de la Clémence et de la Beauté ... Que ce temps soit appelé le temps de l'anarchie'.¹⁴⁰

Artists were rarely activists. Few were those who truly practiced what they preached. As a police informant noted: 'Ils ne se sentaient point d'humeur à descendre dans la rue, pour prendre part aux grèves, aux soulèvements, aux émeutes'.¹⁴¹ In most cases, their revolt was made manifest solely through their art.

¹³⁵ Cited in Maitron 1975, p. 236.

¹³⁶ This is a description of Zo d'Axa by the anarchist journalist Victor Méric. See. V. Méric, *Souvenir d'un militant*, cited in Dhavernas 1981, p. 265.

¹³⁷ Zo d'Axa, *L'Endehors*, n. 46, 12 juin 1892.

¹³⁸ P. Adam, Critique du socialisme et de l'anarchie, *La Revue Blanche*, mai 1893.

¹³⁹ P. Quillard, L'anarchie par la littérature, *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*, n. 25, avril 1892.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ E. Raynaud, *La Renaissance du Livre*, 1920, p. 53.

they were amongst the first to blur the line between the private and public spheres by arguing that intimate dimensions of life are linked to larger socio-political structures. The individualist struggle extends beyond the bounds of oppressive institutions; it encompasses one's daily actions, reactions, thoughts, emotions, and so on. In other words, they realized that "the personal is political". Their unwavering rejection of all forms of domination of an individual, group, or institution over another along with their aspiration to ever greater freedom made them staunch defenders of anarchism *sensu stricto*. Thus, in a sense, the individualist enterprise transcends the confines of nineteenth-century socialism and industrial civilization.

All in all, considering its small number of proponents, the contribution of individualism is quite remarkable. It should not be dismissed as a negligible offshoot of anarchism. As radical critics, innovators, and experimenters, individualists shaped the dynamics of the libertarian movement. Of all socio-political movements in early twentieth-century France, individualist anarchism was that which stressed most emphatically the revolutionizing of personal life.

Though I laid the emphasis on divergences between individualists and the rest of the anarchist movement in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France, this division should not be overstated. In fact, many communists and syndicalists also promoted self-transformation. Pelloutier, a leading syndicalist, famously described anarchists as being 'des amants passionnés de la culture de soi-même'.¹⁷⁴ Kropotkin wrote that: 'Il ne s'agit pas seulement ... de remettre au travailleur « le produit intégral de son travail » ; mais il s'agit de refaire en entier tous les rapports ... entre les individus et entre les agglomérations humaines'.¹⁷⁵ Bakunin wrote that:

¹⁷⁴ F. Pelloutier, Lettre aux anarchistes, *Le Congrès Général du Parti Socialiste Français*, Paris, Stock, 1900.

¹⁷⁵ P. Kropotkine, *La Science moderne et l'anarchie*, Paris, Stock, 1913, p. 173.

[La tyrannie sociale] ne s'impose pas comme une loi à laquelle l'individu est forcé de se soumettre sous peine d'encourir un châtement juridique. Elle domine les hommes par les coutumes, par les cœurs, par la masse des sentiments, des préjugés et des habitudes tant de la vie matérielle que de l'esprit et du cœur ... Il en résulte que, pour se révolter contre cette influence que la société exerce naturellement sur lui, l'homme doit au moins en partie se révolter contre lui-même ... car il n'est lui-même que le produit de la société.¹⁷⁶

One should not see individualism as being completely divorced from the rest of the anarchist movement or exaggerate the divergences between the two tradition. The mainstream of anarchism in France also strived to live as an anarchist in the here and now. As Jean Grave wrote:

De même que la bombe ne constitue pas toute l'anarchie, elle ne constitue pas non plus toute la propagande par le fait. Il y a une propagande, par le fait, que les anarchistes veulent employer, qui est de tous les jours, de tous les instants. C'est celle qui consiste à se rapprocher le plus possible de son idéal, en modelant ses actes sur sa façon de penser.¹⁷⁷

L'individu libre, complètement libre dans tous ses modes d'activités, voilà ce que nous voulons tous.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ M. Bakounine, *L'Empire Knouto-germanique et la révolution sociale, Œuvres complètes* (1870–1871), T. 8, Paris, Champ Libre, 1982, p. 174.

¹⁷⁷ J. Grave, Pour ceux qui parlent sans avoir, *Les Temps nouveaux*, 15–21 janvier 1898.

¹⁷⁸ J. Grave, *La société mourante et l'anarchie*, Paris, Stock, 1893, p. 15.

Literary individualists advocated revolt and embraced acts of terror with ardour. They were staunch defenders of violent propaganda by the deed. Their championship of violence is epitomized by their praise of the *attentats* that occurred between 1892 and 1894, which were regarded as the ultimate expression of acts of individual revolt.¹³⁰ The bomb-thrower, the robber, or the murderer were viewed as no less than individualist virtuosi: 'En loyaux héritiers des Romantiques, ils admiraient les individualités d'exception et le geste flamboyant. Dans Ravachol, Vaillant et Henry, ils retrouvaient les traits des héros favoris que la littérature proposait à leur imagination depuis près d'un siècle'.¹³¹ This quasi-mystical fervour for acts of violence is best illustrated by the worship of the romanticized figure of Ravachol, who came to be seen as a martyr and worshiped as a hero.¹³² The symbolist poet and playwright Pierre Quillard described him as a 'tueur de monstres ou fatidique justicier'.¹³³ Some even saw in him a Christlike or saintly figure: 'Ravachol reste bien le propagateur de la grande idée des religions anciennes qui préconisent la recherche de la mort individuelle pour le bien du monde' – 'un saint nous est né'.¹³⁴

Acts of violence were to serve as means to a greater, nobler end: the ideal of beauty. Literary individualists believed that the theatricalization of revolt and violence could be aesthetically edifying. As the dandy writer Laurent Tailhade infamously claimed: 'Qu'importe le sang pourvu que le geste

¹³⁰ Cf. H. Dupont, *Dynamite et anarchie*, Lille, 1893.

¹³¹ Aubéry 1969, p. 30. According to Jean Grave, Felix Fénéon and the writer Victor Barrucand helped Émile Henry write his famous trial statement. Grave 1973, p. 322.

¹³² For example, see P. Adam, Éloge de Ravachol, *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*, juillet 1892; L. Tailhade, *L'ennemi du peuple par Henrik Ibsen*, 18 février 1899, Paris, 1900, pp. 13–4.

¹³³ P. Quillard, Entretiens sur la vie et la mort de Ravachol, *Mercur de France*, septembre 1892.

¹³⁴ P. Adam, Éloge de Ravachol, *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*, July 1892. Cf. O. Mirbeau, Ravachol, *L'Endehors*, n. 52, 1 mai 1892.

prononçaient en faveur d'une liberté toujours plus grande dans l'art ne désiraient pas nécessairement voir s'opérer la totale transformation économique, sociale et humaine qu'appelaient les anarchistes. Pour nombre d'entre eux, même, nous serions tentés de dire : bien au contraire.¹²⁶

In fact, far from advocating social revolution, many artists did not even call into questions inequalities between individuals and social classes. Quite the reverse, some wished to maintain a fundamental disparity between the few and the masses. It was solely a select number of great men that could transcend rules and conventions. Some aesthetic individualists cared little for the masses: the hero, the superior man, the *übermensch* was their sole prospect. The artist was the paragon of this new aristocracy; he alone – in his quest for excellence – should be given free rein to follow his whims, inclinations, and inspiration. Society's only task was to foster the emergence and flourishing of exceptional men – geniuses whose imagination and power were sufficiently rich and original to create new values.¹²⁷ They were to be the principal, not to say the only motor of humanity's progress. As the historian Pierre Aubéry explains: 'À cette époque [1890s] on était anarchiste par individualisme, par dégoût des fausses élites et des hiérarchies sociales truquées plutôt que par pitié pour les souffrances des humbles et des faibles'.¹²⁸ '[C'est seulement] dans les œuvres des grands artistes [que] sont disséminés les grands principes anarchistes.'¹²⁹ For some aristocrats and aesthetes, there could be no anarchism in social life, no freedom for *hoi polloi*; anarchism was only suitable for a handful of great artists.

¹²⁶ Aubéry 1969, p. 33.

¹²⁷ Cf. R. de Gourmont, *L'idéalisme, Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*, n. 25, avril 1892, pp. 145–8.

¹²⁸ P. Aubéry, Mécislas Golberg, anarchiste, *Le Mouvement social*, n. 52, juin-septembre 1965.

¹²⁹ Réponse d'un artiste, *La révolte*, 30 décembre-5 janvier 1894.

Conversely, most individualists never lost sight of the centrality of broader social transformation. As Pierre Chardon, E. Armand's close collaborator during the First World War, wrote:

Quoiqu'individualiste, je ne nie pas la question sociale ... Si je suis l'Unique, je n'oublierai jamais (et nul anarchiste ne peut l'oublier) que d'autres uniques m'environnent, car la glorification du moi conduit à tout autre chose qu'à l'anarchie.¹⁷⁹

Individualists' primary struggle was against "inner tyrants" and in favour of the development of "conscious individuals". How did they seek to achieve those ends? In what follows, I shall address this question and delve deeper into the history of individualist anarchism by distinguishing between three main individualist modes of action.

¹⁷⁹ P. Chardon, Lettre à E. Armand, 24 novembre 1914, *Pierre Chardon, Paris, Ed. de l'en dehors*, 1928, p. 29.

III- Three Individualist Ideal Types

As previously explained, a faithful account of anarchism recognizes that it consists primarily of modes of revolutionary action rather than a corpus of theoretical doctrines. Manfredonia, a French historian of anarchism, put forth a typology of anarchism based upon anarchist modes of action.¹ Drawing upon Weber's notion of '*idealtypus*,'² he classifies anarchism by distinguishing between three ideal types, namely (1) *insurrectionnel*, (2) *syndicaliste*, and (3) *éducationniste-réalisateur*. He argues that insurrectionists' mode of action is a radicalization of revolutionary communists' tactics, while that of syndicalists parallels trade union modes of organisation that emerged throughout the nineteenth century; and that of educationists can be traced back to social reformers before the French Revolution of 1848. This typology clearly makes for a much more nuanced reading of the history of the movement and its connection to other social struggles. This approach

¹ Manfredonia defines anarchist modes of action or "libertarian practices" as 'toute activité militante consciente publique ou privée ... visant à préparer ou à réaliser les changements nécessaires à la venue d'une société anarchiste (p. 16).

² M. Weber, "Objectivity" in social sciences and social policy, *Essays in the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, M. Weber (ed.), E. A. Shils & H. A. Finch (trans.), New York, The Free Press, 1949 [1904]; M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, E. Fischoff (trans.), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978 [1922]. For a recent discussion of the historiography of Weber's notion of ideal type and its practical application, see R. Swedberg, How to use Max Weber's ideal type in sociological analysis, *Journal of Classical Sociology*, vol. 18, n. 3, 2018.

between individualists and artists: L'art [est] l'interprétation individuelle de la vie extérieure, manifestation parachevée de la personne intime

... Peut-être nul n'est plus artiste en ce sens que l'anarchiste individualiste'.¹²¹ The success of Maurice Barrès's first publication, the trilogy *Le Culte du Moi*, and of his novel *L'ennemi des lois*, epitomizes the egotist trend amongst artists at the time.¹²² 'Il nous faut chaque moi gardant sa libre allure' wrote Barrès.¹²³ He was echoed by Zo d'Axa: 'En dehors ... c'est bien le vêtement approprié à la libre allure'.¹²⁴ Artists desired to free themselves from all social conventions so as to work towards the development of their personal abilities. As Mirbeau stated:

Je ne crois qu'à une organisation purement individualiste. Sous quelque étiquette que l'État se présente et fonctionne, il est funeste à l'activité humaine et dégradant : car il empêche l'individu de se développer dans son sens normal ; il fausse ou étouffe toutes les facultés.¹²⁵

Artists' anarcho-individualist propaganda sometimes lacked any kind of socio-political horizon. Many *littérateurs* only wanted to be free to express their creativity whilst being indifferent to broader social problems:

Le poète est anarchiste dans la mesure où il exprime, de manière significative, concrète, imagé, son individualité propre. Les littérateurs qui se

¹²¹ E. Armand, *hors du troupeau*, septembre 1911.

¹²² M. Barrès, *Sous l'œil des barbares*, Paris, Lemerre, 1888; *Un homme libre*, Paris, Perrin, 1889; *Le jardin de Bérénice*, Paris, Perrin, 1891; *L'ennemi des lois*, Paris, Perrin, 1893.

¹²³ M. Barrès, *La Plume*, 3 mars 1892.

¹²⁴ *L'Endehors*, 9 juin 1891.

¹²⁵ O. Mirbeau, Un référendum artistique et littéraire, *L'ermitage*, juillet 1893.

enthusiasm for political engagement; they saw artists as fellow rebels challenging social mores and destroying established values. Reclus celebrated this union and collaboration in *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*:

Poètes et artistes, critiques et philosophes, vous m'appellez parmi vous ... Hier nous étions des inconnus les uns pour les autres. Aujourd'hui nous sommes frères par la pensée et frères par l vouloir ... Salut à vous qui entrez dans l'armée des révoltés ! ... Veuillez me compter parmi les vôtres.¹¹⁹

Artists and anarchists acted in concert against the social order of their day and worked jointly towards the elaboration of new ways of life.

It is through the symbolist movement that anarchism found its most potent artistic expression. Reacting to the excessive formalism of Parnassianism, symbolists advocated totally uninhibited and spontaneous individual creativity. There was to be no limitation, no restrictions, and no rules to art. As the influential writer and critic de Gourmont noted: 'Le symbolisme se traduit littéralement par le mot liberté et pour les violents par le mot anarchie'.¹²⁰ Symbolists quickly saw a continuity between their search for free self-expression and the libertarian project of individual emancipation.

It was the specifically individualistic component of anarchism – sometimes devoid of its social dimension – that most appealed to artists. Art, after all, is the highest expression of one's individuality. There was thus a natural point of encounter

complexe, ce hors-la-loi, ce hors d'école, cet isolé chercheur d'au-delà, ne se dessine-t-il pas dans ce mot : « en-dehors ». *L'Endehors*, mai 1891.

¹¹⁹ E. Reclus, Aux compagnons rédacteurs des entretiens, *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires*, n. 28, juillet 1892. Of all literary reviews, *Les entretiens* embraced anarchism most empathically.

¹²⁰ R. de Gourmont, Le symbolisme, *La Revue Blanche*, n. 9, juin 1892, pp. 321–5.

also has the advantage of moderating the influence of the insurrectionist type, which is generally considered to be the most momentous expression of anarchism.³ Indeed, some even see it as the paradigm of anarchist practice, describing all other libertarian actions as variations of this model.⁴ Finally, it rehabilitates other practices belonging to the “*educationniste-réalisateur*” category, which always occupied a central place in the movement and which is key to this study.⁵

I suggest that a similar ideal-typical typology can also be applied to individualism.⁶ The tripartite typology of individualism based upon their principal modes of action and visions of social change is summarized in the following table:⁷

³ Manfredonia 2007, p. 27.

⁴ Ibid, p. 30.

⁵ Ibid. See also, G. Manfredonia (ed.), *Vivre l'anarchie*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 2010. Note that other scholars of anarchism have used the ideal type method of analysis. As early as the late nineteenth century, Hamon claimed that he wanted to establish the socialist-anarchist ideal type. A. Hamon, *Psychologie de l'anarchiste-socialiste*, Paris, Stock, 1895, p. 10.

⁶ In his 1984 thesis, Manfredonia identifies six principal trends within anarcho-individualism. First, a communist individualism promoted by Mauricius who had become the editor of *L'anarchie*. Second, a scientific and educationist individualism promoted by Lorulot as well as Ryner and Devaldès in *L'idée libre*. Third, a pure individualism promoted by Armand and Renard in journals such as *Les réfactaires*, *L'ère nouvelle*, or *hors du troupeau*. Anti-communist, it was opposed to illegalism and revolutionarism. Their individualism was 'une attitude intellectuelle, une réalisation intérieure, une méthode de vie et d'activité en devenir'. Fourth, an aesthetic individualism opposed to communism and scientism that promoted anti-social and heroic acts in *L'action d'art*. They held bandits like those of the bande à Bonnot in high regard, for they viewed them as individuals who put their interests, ideals, and happiness first, regardless of social consequences. Fifth, a communist individualism of the milieux libres influenced by Butaud and Zaikowska and promoted in *La vie anarchiste*, *Flambeau*, or *Reveil de l'esclave*. They founded communist colonies and advocated a simple, vegetarian lifestyle.

⁷ This typology is not meant to be a perfect articulation of Weber's concept of idealtypus, though it is loosely based on it.

	Innsurrectionist Type	Egoist Type	Constructivist Type
<i>View of Revolution</i>	Sudden social transformation		
Violent rupture			

Personal transformation

Self-creation | Collective and environmental transformation

Social paradigm shift |

gence of an ‘intellectual proletariat’.¹¹⁵ It became more and more difficult to live as a writer without independent means. Several educated individuals were unable to find a job or were forced to take on demeaning intellectual labour, working as ghost writers or journalists. More generally, commercial society enslaved individuals and hence constituted an obstacle to artistic creativity. Artists aspired to a live in a completely free society in which they could fully realize their creative potential.¹¹⁶ The anarchist endeavour seemed to coincide perfectly with this aspiration. As the avantgarde writer Mirbeau stated: ‘Je ne conçois pas qu’un artiste, c’est-à-dire l’homme libre par excellence, puisse chercher un autre idéal social que celui de l’anarchie’.¹¹⁷

Anarchist and literary circles converged in the early 1890s. Artists began to take up the anarchist cause and anarchists started to talk about art. Men and women of letters befriended anarchist activists, published and circulated their texts, and spread the ideas of the main theoreticians of the movement such as Kropotkin, Malatesta, and Reclus. Anarchists and artists worked jointly in two main periodicals, namely *L’Endehors*, published by Zo d’Axa, followed by the *Revue Anarchiste* (later known as *Revue Libertaire*) published by A. Ibel and Charles Châtel.¹¹⁸ Anarchists welcomed this literary

¹¹⁵ Cf. H. Béranger, Les prolétaires intellectuels de France, *La Revue des revues*, 15 janvier 1898.

¹¹⁶ Art under the Third Republic depended upon the patronage of the bourgeoisie as well as that of the state. Art works displayed in the salons were only those that were intuitionally sanctioned. The unconventional works of avant-garde artist were rejected. These were more realistic in content and rougher in form than those of the academicists. They depicted scenes of ordinary everyday life rather than themes taken from mythology or history.

¹¹⁷ O. Mirbeau, Un référendum artistique et littéraire, *L’ermitage*, juillet 1893.

¹¹⁸ The first edition of *L’Endehors* defies the individualist as ‘Celui que rien n’ enrôle et qu’une impulsive nature guide seule, ce passionnel, tant

Luce; illustrators, such as Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Henri Gabriel Ibels, and Adolphe Willette, as well as several other literary men and women.¹¹⁰ Even Stéphane Mallarmé, Alphonse Daudet, Pierre Loti, Anatole France, and Leconte de Lisle subscribed to Jean Grave's prominent anarchist journal *La Révolte*. A police report from 1891 stated that 'ce n'est point parmi la classe ouvrière qu'il faut aller chercher les nouveaux anarchistes, mais parmi la classe des jeunes lettré et même celle des lettrés d'âge mur'.¹¹¹ According to the art and literature review *L'ermitage*, which conducted a survey on the organisation of society in 1893, the majority of artists were in favour of anarchism.¹¹² Oscar Wilde's response to the above-mentioned survey encapsulates artists' endorsement of the movement: 'Autrefois, j'étais poète et tyran. Maintenant je suis artiste et anarchiste'.¹¹³ Until 1894 almost all avant-garde and other young artistic publications overtly sympathized with anarchism.¹¹⁴

Although the extent to which artists and writers were truly committed to anarchism varied greatly, they all shared a view of their place in society. Artists saw themselves as social outcasts alongside the proletariat: they too were the subjects of the oppression of bourgeois society. The 1880s witnessed the emer-

¹¹⁰ For further examples, see E. W. Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961; P. Aubery, *L'anarchisme et les symbolistes, Le Mouvement social*, 1969.

¹¹¹ Cited in Granier 2008, p. 19.

¹¹² Un référendum artistique et littéraire, *L'ermitage*, juillet 1893. The question asked was 'Quelle est la meilleure condition du bien social?'. Most artists under the age of 35 supported anarchism: Out of 100 responses, 52 were in favour of 'a free and spontaneous organisation'.

¹¹³ O. Wilde, Un référendum artistique et littéraire, *L'ermitage*, juillet 1893.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Lefèvre, J-J & Oriol, P. *La feuille qui ne tremblait pas*, Paris, Flammarion, 2013, p. 25 ; Karterian, Zo d'Axa, parcours d'un endehors, Zo d'Axa, *De Mazas à Jérusalem*, Paris, Mutines Séditions, 2015.

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Agonism</i>
Opposition	
Subversion and revolt:	
Fighting for freedom by destroying social structures	<i>Autopoiesis</i>
Subjectification	
Creativity and authenticity:	
Embodying freedom by rising above social structures	<i>Heterotopia</i>
Construction	
Construction and edification:	
Exercising freedom by creating alternative social structures	
<i>Tactic</i>	Illegalism
Self-sacrifice	
Propaganda by the deed	Self-affirmation
Psychosomatic reconditioning	
Moral perfectionism	
Artistic expression	
Propaganda by the word	Experimenting with different lifestyles
Creating communities and	

*Relation to the Rest of Society	Should be prompted to uprising	Should be ignored or edited	Should be inspired to join of their own free will
<i>Forms of Association</i>	None or affinity groups	Union of egoists Communal living	
<i>Best-known Figures</i>	Ravachol, Bonnot Gang	Zo d'Axa, E. Armand	Sophie Zaikowska, Georges Butaud

A typology based on ideal types does not attempt to put individualists into neat boxes. The ideal type is grounded in history, but it is not meant to be a statistical reflection of reality (an average), a perfect conceptualisation of reality (an essence), an empirical prediction (a hypothesis), or a prescriptive model (an ethical ideal). Rather, by way of selection, simplification, and accentuation (*gedankliche Steigerung*), it is a theoretical construction and a conceptual tool that enables one to better understand and interpret (*verstehen*) eclectic, discrete, diffuse, or suprahistorical phenomena.⁸ It can be used for three main purposes: terminological, heuristic, and classificatory.⁹ Simply put, ideal types are instrumental idea-constructs that help the scholar make better sense of an apparently chaotic reality and how it unfolds overtime.

⁸ M. Weber, *L'objectivité de la connaissance dans les sciences sociales et la politique sociale, Essais sur la théorie de la science*, Paris, Plon, 1965 [1904], p. 185. Manfredonia 2007, pp. 25–6.

⁹ Weber 1978, p. 21.

short-lived and had dubious social aims, artists played an important role in shaping individualist anarchism in fin-de-siècle France.¹⁰⁷

A whole generation of young artists and intellectuals embraced anarchism in the early 1890s. Several literary journals, such as *La Plume* (1889–1914), *Mercure de France* (1890–1965), *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires* (1890–1893) and *La Revue Blanche* (1889–1903) discussed, promoted, or at least sympathized with anarchist ideas.¹⁰⁸ Fin-de-siècle artists and writers expressed a desire to be more politically active:

Un courant révolutionnaire et socialiste agite la jeunesse, non seulement la jeunesse ouvrière, mais celle qui pense, qui lit, qui écrit. L'art se soucie de devenir un art social, les poètes descendent de leur tour d'ivoire. Ils veulent se mêler aux luttes, une soif d'action domine les écrivains ...¹⁰⁹

These new supporters of anarchism included symbolist writers, such as Félix Fénéon, Benard Lazard, Octave Mirbeau, Adolphe Retté, Remy de Gourmont; neo-impressionist painters, such as Pissarro, Signac, Seurat, and Maximilien

¹⁰⁷ Scholarship on the relation between anarchism and art, especially neo-impressionism and avant-garde modernism is abundant. See R. L. Herbert & E. W. Herbert, *Artists and Anarchism*, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 102, n. 693, 1960; D. D. Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts*, New York, Knopf, 1970; A. Springer, *Terrorism and Anarchy*, *Art Journal*, vol. 38, n. 4, 1979; R. D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siècle France*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989; A. Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001; R. Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Finde-Siècle France*, Hampshire, Ashgate, 2007; A. Antliff, *Anarchy and Art*, Vancouver, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ For example, *La Plume* published a special edition on anarchism in 1894 and *La Revue Blanche* published articles on Bakunin, Thoreau, and Tolstoy. It also published the first French translation of Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*. See also *L'Escarmouche* (1893–1894); *La Revue anarchiste* (later known as *La Revue libertaire*) (1893–1894); *Le Courrier social* (1894).

¹⁰⁹ J-B. Clément, *Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, avril 1892.

accompli joyeusement, librement, par amour est moral.¹⁰⁴

This egoist is not a misanthrope or solipsist. They did not want to live in isolation or as hermits. Most egoists actively sought various forms of community and camaraderie. Some gathered in the *causeries populaires* whilst others lived in libertarian colonies. Staying true to core anarchist values, the society the egoist wishes to prefigure was one of solidarity, collaboration, and mutual aid. The egoist type is personified in what follows in the figures of the aesthete and the sage.

1. The Aesthete

L'individualiste est révolutionnaire par excellence, mais c'est aussi un artiste qui veut faire de sa vie une œuvre d'art.

Gaétano Manfredonia

a. Literary Individualism (1890–1894)

Anarchism was a cultural vogue of the early 1890s. As an article from *The Speaker* reported at the beginning of the *attentat* period in 1892: 'Anarchism, in fact, is the craze rather than the scare of the moment'.¹⁰⁵ From 1890 more and more avant-garde artists and began to take interest in libertarian ideas.¹⁰⁶ Although the fusion of art and politics was relatively

¹⁰⁴ P. Chardon, *La Mêlée*, n. 1, 15 mars 1918.

¹⁰⁵ Anarchism in France, *The Speaker: the liberal review*, 19 Nov. 1892, vol. 6, p. 605.

¹⁰⁶ This was not the first time artists and political activists came together. In the 1850s Courbet worked hand in hand with Proudhon. "Avant-garde" meant that artists saw themselves as being pioneers of social change. In many ways, artists were also heirs to the communards' stance on art and literature, namely, their rejection of the notion of "l'art pour l'art" in favour of a vision of "l'art pour la vie" – art that has the power to change life. Cf Garnier 2008, pp. 21–2.

Before we examine these three ideal types and "confront" them with their historical manifestations,¹⁰ two important caveats must be borne in mind. First, the above-mentioned characteristics spring from an abstraction and synthesis of key elements of individualist thought and practice. Second these categories are neither fixed nor mutually exclusive; quite the reverse, they often overlap with one another.

It should similarly be noted that the three individualist types (insurrectionist, egoist, and constructivist) and their respective strategies (agonism, autopoiesis and heterotopia) parallel the above-mentioned revolt triad, namely deconstruction, emancipation/self-affirmation, and experimentation. The ideal types do not merely capture different modes of political action, but also characterize different modes of the *ascesis* of self-transformation (which do not necessarily follow a linear progression, and which may be re-applied multiple times). Individualist revolt can thus be understood as three complementary ways to live the ordinary anarchist life, which are also three ways of practicing freedom: fighting for it individually, embodying it personally, and exercising it socially.

i. Insurrectionist

Tout ce qui peut amoindrir ou détruire l'autorité, la propriété et l'argent est un acte anarchiste.

Libertad

Le droit de vivre ne se mendie pas, il se prend.

Alexandre Marius Jacob

¹⁰ U. Gerhaldt, The use of Weberian ideal-typical methodology in quantitative data interpretation, *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology*, vol. 45, 1994.

Insurrectionist individualism is undoubtedly the best-known and most often cited anarchist type. So much so that members of the public as well as some ill-informed scholars sometimes reduce the entire libertarian movement to it. The insurrectionist epitomizes the popular image of the anarchist as a terrorist or a vandal.

The insurrectionist seeks to destroy all sources of oppression. All anarchist institutions are to be demolished. Reform is not an option. Violence in the sense of direct, physical confrontation with the forces of oppression, is viewed as a painful necessity – ‘une fatalité regrettable mais inéluctable’ as Faure put it – for there are no effective peaceful means of bringing about radical social change.¹¹ Thus, acts of violence are necessary, warranted, and encouraged. Blood needs to be shed for the capitalist and bourgeois state to be overthrown, eradicated, and abolished once and for all: ‘Notre action doit être la révolte permanente ... par le poignard, le fusil, la dynamite’.¹² ‘Seul une série ininterrompue d’attentats et d’explosions ... [feront] capituler la société capitaliste’.¹³ Civil war is regarded as an inevitable stage in the process of social transformation. It is the price to pay to prevent much greater future evils. All militant activity, from propaganda to education, is geared towards cultivating the revolutionary spirit. The insurrectionist’s rallying call is “Down with the old world!” or in Libertad’s words: ‘Que crève le vieux monde!’.¹⁴

The insurrectionist’s ultimate goal is revolution. Revolution is a single, cataclysmic event, that causes a radical break with the anarchist, capitalist, and bourgeois state. An 1892 article from *The Speaker* claimed that ‘The Anarchists have no theories and no illusions. Their one dream is to destroy society as it exists,

¹¹ S. Faure, La violence anarchiste, *l’Encyclopédie Anarchiste* (1925–1934), S. Faure (ed.), 1911, I.

¹² P. Kropotkin, *Le Révolté*, n. 22, 25 décembre 1880.

¹³ Archives nationales, Police report, F7/15968.

¹⁴ Libertad, *l’anarchie*, 26 décembre 1906.

L’individu conscient, en voie d’émancipation, tendant vers la réalisation d’un type nouveau : l’homme qui ne ressent aucun besoin de réglementation ou contrainte extérieure parce qu’il possède assez de puissance de volition pour déterminer ses besoins personnels et garder son équilibre individuel.¹⁰²

The egoist wishes to become a person who is able to exercise, cultivate, and develop their intellectual and physical abilities to the full. They strive to nourish both their minds and their bodies.

Intellectual training should not be conducted at the expense of physical training, and vice versa. They seek to rid themselves of artificial needs and constraining behavioural patterns that render one dependent, subservient, and unable to fully enjoy life. For this reason, they wish to free themselves from all social intoxicants and debilitating habits such as the consumption of tobacco and alcohol. For the egoist, the cultivation of a relatively strict “*hygiène de vie*” is the key to achieve self-mastery.

L’anarchiste souhaite vivre sa vie, le plus possible, moralement, intellectuellement, économiquement, sans se préoccuper du reste du monde, exploiteurs comme exploités ; sans vouloir dominer si exploiter autrui, mais prêt à réagir par tous les moyens contre quiconque interviendrait dans sa vie ou lui interdirait d’exprimer sa pensée par la plume ou la parole.¹⁰³

Est naturel et sain, tout ce qui n’implique pas domination, exploitation, contrainte. Tout ce qui est

¹⁰² E. Armand, *Qu’est-ce qu’un anarchiste ? Thèses et Opinions*, Paris, Éd. de l’anarchie, 1908, p. 65.

¹⁰³ E. Armand, *Petit manuel anarchiste individualiste*, Paris, 1911, pp. 1–2.

Lutter contre nous-mêmes, contre nos mentalités faussées, contre notre éducation déplorable, contre nos défauts, nos vices, nos tares, pour essayer de nous libérer des tyrans intérieurs, des puissances louches et mauvaises qui surgissent en les arcanes de nos têtes, pour nous réaliser en la puissante vitalité de l'homme sain, normal, lucide, pour devenir des anarchistes.¹⁰⁰

La violence bestiale, la haine, l'esprit moutonnier des meneurs, la crédulité des foules – voilà ce qu'il faut annihiler pour transformer la société. Améliorer les individus, les purifier, les rendre plus forts, leur faire aimer et désirer ardemment la vie, les rendre capables de révoltes salutaires, telle est l'unique issue. Hors de la rénovation des Hommes, il n'est pas de salut.¹⁰¹

The egoist believes in the individual's capacity for self-improvement and self-mastery. To this end, it is necessary to cultivate and refine one's critical mind through education, debates, open discussions, and so on. The egoist regards science as the best means to expose prejudice and to gain objective knowledge. Scientific authority acquired through rational examination is the only authority they are willing to accept. Yet their aim is not so much the accumulation of knowledge as self-determination.

The egoist does not want to impose their views upon others. They do not seek to instruct or to pass on knowledge. Rather, they strive to empower people by helping them become free thinkers and autonomous actors in their lives. The aim is the creation of conscious individuals:

¹⁰⁰ Mauricius, *Le rôle social des anarchistes*, Paris 1911, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Serge 1989, p. 63.

and to keep it destroyed. Beyond that all is vague.¹⁵ Though this statement is clearly an exaggeration that shows how the media caricatured anarchism as early as in the 1890s, what is certain is that, for the insurrectionist, the old world is to be turned to dust.

Revolution is not merely a negative enterprise; it is a twofold process. The urge to revolt springs from a hatred of the exploitative social order, but also from the yearning to create a new world. The more that is destroyed the better so that one may build totally new foundations. The intensity of one's urge to destroy is proportional to one's urge to create. Yet creation is only possible if the old order is dismantled in its entirety. Everything – from the law to religion, including culture and the economy – needs to be torn down irreversibly so new foundations can be erected:

C'est dans l'abîme d'une catastrophe complète, d'un péril physique absolu que l'humanité doit jeter un regard pour s'éloigner des éléments qui l'y ont amenée, pour s'élancer résolument dans des voies nouvelles, pour creuser les fondations d'une existence vraiment neuve, vraiment progressive, vraiment humaine.¹⁶

Destruction and construction, eradication and edification go hand in hand. It is total destruction that allows for complete regeneration: '1. Tout détruire, jusqu'à la dernière pierre ; 2. Tout construire de nouveau'.¹⁷

The insurrectionist often views themselves as a catalyst for revolution, which will eventually be carried out by the people.

¹⁵ Anarchism in France, *The Speaker: the liberal review*, 19 Nov. 1892, vol. 6, p. 606. *The Speaker* was a weekly review of politics, literature, science, and arts published in London from 1890 to 1907.

¹⁶ Voline, Choses vécues, *La Revue anarchiste*, n. 20, septembre 1923, pp. 12–5.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

They believe that people's innate revolutionary drive needs to be awakened. The insurrectionist is a key individual actor, but a genuine revolution requires spontaneous mass insurrection. They seek to stir the masses to revolt and work towards the diffusion of the anti-authoritarian and revolutionary mindset throughout society. As Émile Henry declared, a few days before detonating a bourgeois café:

Les actes de brutale révolte ... portent juste, car ils réveillent la masse, la secouent d'un violent coup de fouet, et lui montrent le côté vulnérable de la bourgeoisie toute tremblante encore au moment où le révolté marche à l'échafaud.¹⁸

The insurrectionist uses their arrest and condemnation as means of spreading propaganda. In their trial statements and their wills, they take full responsibility for their actions and stand up for them.¹⁹ They reject all court judgment and ruling, refusing to be judged by anyone but themselves: 'La société n'a ni le droit de juger ni le droit de punir. L'homme seul a le droit de se juger ... La justice est un acte de la conscience ... or la conscience ne peut être jugée, condamnée ou absoute que par elle-même'.²⁰ From being the accused, they become the accusers, denouncing the injustices that had prompted their rebellion. Thus, they aspired to be an example of determination,

¹⁸ E. Henry, *L'Endehors*, 28 août 1892.

¹⁹ See, in particular, the trial statements of Émile Henry, Alexandre Marius Jacob, and Raymond Callemin, as well as those of Ravachol, Auguste Vaillant, Clément Duval, and Sante Caserio. In his will, Monier wrote: Je lègue à la société mon ardent désir qu'un jour, peu lointain, règne dans les institutions sociales un maximum de bien-être et d'indépendance, afin que l'individu, dans ses loisirs, puisse mieux se consacrer à ce qui fait la beauté de la vie. Monier, *Mérid* 2010 [1926], p. 201. See also, Déclaration (interdite) de Ravachol à son procès, *La Révolte*, Jul. 1892; *Only one Tribunal: Myself*, 2013.

²⁰ P-J. Proudhon, *Idee générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle*, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Librairie internationale, 1868, p. 275.

by the deed never achieved its aim of leading the masses to an uprising. It led instead to an upsurge of repression. Fortunately, the outreach of anarchism and anarcho-individualism went well beyond that of dynamite.

ii. Egoist

J'ignore où je vais. Je vais. Et cela me suffit. Je vais, droit devant moi, au fil de mes caprices, me transformant sans cesse. Point semblable à ce que je serai plus tard. Je vais et ne veux point être emprisonnée entre les quatre murs d'une

doctrine ou d'un programme ... Je vais, je m'arrête chez qui me plaît et j'en repars dès qu'on veut me débiter en règles ... Je vais devant moi, éternellement ardente et passionnée ... Je suis l'anarchie.

Hermann Sterne

If the insurrectionist is the anarchist stereotype, the egoist is the clichéd individualist. For the egoist, there will never be genuine social transformation until each individual becomes fully conscious and self-aware. Society will only change once individuals have changed themselves: 'Revolution means the creation of new men and women. Revolution means a new life. On earth. Today'.⁹⁹ Individuals should endeavour to break free from the shackles of social conditioning and indoctrination, to emancipate themselves from the fetters of social norms and conventions, and to rid themselves of the bonds of social prejudices and biases. The egoist is an *en-dehors* who looks *en-dedans*. Revolution begins with introspection:

⁹⁹ R. L. Nichols, *Rebels, Beginners, and Buffoons: Politics as Action*, T. Ball, (ed.), *Political Theory and Praxis: New Perspectives*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1977, p. 183.

de l'avouer : je suis avec les bandits. Je trouve que leur rôle est le beau rôle ; parfois je vois en eux des hommes. Ailleurs je ne vois que des mufles et des patins. Les bandits prouvent de la force ... les bandits prouvent leur ferme volonté de vivre.⁹⁶

A strong wave of repression and incarceration, akin to that which followed first wave of anarchist terrorism in 1894 and 1895, ensued. As a result, contributors to *l'anarchie* sought to downplay their support of illegalism or provided rational explanations for their motives.⁹⁷ All in all, robberies and bombings failed to rally new adherents to the cause. The Bonnot Gang wreaked havoc within individualism and marked a turning point in the movement.

In summary, there were two main waves of anarchist acts of violence in France. One from 1892 to 1894 beginning with Ravachol's bombings and ending with the assassination of President Sadi Carnot; and one from 1909 to 1913 with the *bandits tragiques*. In both instances, most mainstream anarchists repudiated acts of violence whereas individualists defended them. These events contributed to the emergence of the stereotypical picture of the anarchist in French collective memory as a thug or a bomb-throwing terrorist. Whilst it is true that insurrectionism was part and parcel of the movement, neither anarchism nor individualism can be reduced to it. Anarchist attacks are significant yet isolated events when one considers the movement in its entirety. What is more, most anarchists came to view insurrectionism as a failed strategy, which did more harm than good to the movement.⁹⁸ Violent propaganda

⁹⁶ Le Retif, Les Bandits, *l'anarchie*, n. 352, 4 janvier 1912.

⁹⁷ Lorulot, Tous à l'œuvre, *l'anarchie*, n. 390, 3 août 1912. Cf. Mauricius, *L'apologie du crime*, Paris, Les Causeries Populaires, 1912.

⁹⁸ For further discussion on the shortcomings of insurrectionism, see D. Novak, Anarchism and Individual Terrorism, *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 20, n. 2, 1954.

bravery, and selfreliance that will inspire others to take action; for whilst the insurrectionist ignites the flame of revolt, it is the blaze of collective indignation that will reduce the old world to ashes.

The insurrectionist is not a theoretician. Quite the reverse, they often reject theory as counterproductive, futile, and idle. Anti-doctrinal, they can even be anti-intellectual.²¹ Intellectuals are seen as mere dilettantes and snobs: 'ils s'amuse avec les idées, jonglent avec elles sans les prendre au sérieux ... Notre admiration émue va vers ceux qui écrivent leur révolte avec le sang, et non avec l'encre'.²² Action is what matters above all else: 'il ne faut pas pérorer mais agir' stated Émile's brother, Fortuné Henry.²³ Victor Méric described insurrectionists' motives as follows : 'À la base l'instinct de révolte, puis beaucoup de lassitude, le mépris des prophètes et des théoriciens révolutionnaires, le besoin ardent de vivre, de jouir de la vie, coûte que coûte'.²⁴ The insurrectionist acts immediately and spontaneously, without overthinking or overanalysing. *Primum vivere, deinde philosophari*, live first, then philosophize.²⁵

Insurrectionists often came from the peasantry or the working class. They had to leave school and took on gruelling work during their early adolescence. 'À douze ans, on m'a jeté dans un métier qui au lieu de me développer a comprimé mes facultés intellectuelles' wrote Soudy, a member of the

²¹ Cf. Manfredonia 1984, p. 114.

²² P. Chardon, *par delà la mêlée*, n. 23.

²³ Archives Nationales, Police report, F7/15968, 12 novembre 1892.

²⁴ V. Méric, *Les Bandits tragiques*, Marseille, Le Flibustier, 2010 [1926], p. 155.

²⁵ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Philosophie, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

Bonnot Gang, shortly before his death sentence.²⁶ Similarly, his associate Carouy²⁷ recounted:

À douze ans et demi, on me mit au travail dans une raffinerie de sucre. J’y appris tout ce que les enfants apprennent dans les ateliers : à être méchant, menteur, rampant devant les forts représentés par les chefs, les contremâîtres, premiers ouvriers ... J’aimerais mieux la mort que la perspective de travailler toute ma vie en atelier.²⁸

Carouy was true to his word: he committed suicide the day he found out he was sentenced to 20 years of hard labour.

The insurrectionist does not necessarily believe in social progress, individual liberation, or the success of revolution. They may at times abandon hope for mass insurrection: ‘Il rejette l’Utopie Révolution. La masse ne compte pas plus à ses yeux que l’avenir. Il veut vivre et tout de suite ... il se jette, l’arme au poing, contre la société.’²⁹ The resigned insurrectionist can also be a nihilist who is simply sickened by society. They destroy for the sake of destruction and for their own catharsis: ‘Il frappe parce que l’écœurement a atteint son maximum

²⁶ E. Armand, *L’Illégaliste anarchiste est-il notre camarade ?* Paris, Éd. de L’Endehors, 1926.

²⁷ Édouard Carouy was born in Belgium in 1883. His father was a customs officer and his mother died when he was 3 years old. He began working when he was 12 in a sugar refinery. He had various small jobs and worked as a lathe operator as an adult – an occupation he loathed. In 1906, he embraced the anarchist cause and became one of the managers of *Le Révolté* alongside Raymond Callemin and Victor Kibaltchiche. He moved to Paris in 1909, where he lived in the community of *l’anarchie* in Romainville and where he became an avid reader of individualist authors. Accused of murdering two people as a member of the Bonnot Gang, he was sentenced to hard labour for life. He committed suicide the night of the ruling in the winter of 1913.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Méric 2010 [1926], p. 214.

de moyens à ma disposition’.⁹² The *bandits tragiques* were not mere thugs, their actions had clear political motives.

Thus, it is legitimate to see them as representatives of insurrectionary individualism. What is more, all members of the Bonnot Gang operated in anarchist circles and contributed to individualist journals such as *l’anarchie*. As can be explicitly read from an article from *The Manchester Guardian*, ‘there can be no doubt that Bonnot and his associates were individualist Anarchists’.⁹³ Similarly,

André Colomer wrote that ‘ceux qu’on appela les « Bandits tragiques » furent les signes fils de Libertad. En vérité ils devaient être *les bandits individualistes*’.⁹⁴

Unlike mainstream anarchists, individualists defended and even praised the Bonnot Gang, as evidenced by numerous articles in *l’anarchie*. Mauricius, for instance, asserted that Bonnot was an anarchist:

Bonnot, allant revolver au point, reprendre l’or des bourgeois dans la sacoche de la Société générale, était anarchiste.

Bonnot se jouant pendant des mois de l’autorité, représentée par tous les Guichard de la Sûreté, était anarchiste.

Bonnot défendant sa liberté à coup de browning, était anarchiste.⁹⁵

Victor Serge expressed sympathy for the *bandits tragiques*:

Qu’en plein jour l’on fusille un misérable garçon de banque, cela prouve que des hommes ont enfin compris les vertus de l’audace. Je ne crains pas

⁹² Ravachol 2010 [1892], p. 82.

⁹³ The Paris “Bandits”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1912, p. 6.

⁹⁴ A. Colomer, À nous deux ! Patrie !, *L’Action d’Art*, 1919–1920.

⁹⁵ Mauricius, mémoires, P-V. Berthier (ed.), 1974. Cited in Steiner 2008, 150.

Thirty alleged anarchists were put on trial on a charge of criminal association [*association de malfaiteurs*]. Among them were Jean Grave, Sébastien Faure, Charles Châtel, Félix Fénéon, Émile Pouget, Paul Reclus, and Louis Matha. Although all genuine anarchists were acquitted and relaxed, others went into exile, were sent to jail or labour camps, or were guillotined. As a result of this harsh repression, anarchist activity was severely curtailed during that period. Most libertarians lost hope in the sudden onset of a violent revolution. Non-violent strategies, especially striking and joining syndicates, came to be advocated by the majority of anarchists from 1895 onwards.

A second wave of anarchist terrorism occurred between the years 1909 and 1913. It crystallized the popular image of the anarchist as a terrorist. This new wave of violent propaganda by the deed reached a climax with the so-called Bonnot Gang [*La bande à Bonnot*], which committed nine murders between 1912 and 1913.⁹¹ As in the 1890s, mainstream anarchists heavily criticized those terrorist attacks. They adamantly condemned the gang's apparent bourgeois and selfish motives: the Bonnot Gang stole for themselves, killing innocent employees in the process. Many were those who claimed they had no association with anarchism.

In truth, for the *bandits tragiques*, as they came to be known, their acts of individual revolt came within the scope of their individualist convictions. As Bonnot declared: 'je me suis révolté ... parce que je ne voulais pas vivre la vie de la société actuelle et que je ne voulais pas attendre que je sois mort pour vivre que je me suis défendu contre les oppresseurs par toutes sortes

⁹¹ E. Michon, *Essai de psychologie criminelle. Un peu de l'âme des bandits*, Paris, Dorbon-Ainé, 1913. p. 277. Bonnot was never the leader of the gang. Callemine (aka Raymond-la-Science) was the tactical orchestrator. Cf. Méric 2010 [1926], p. 130. Other members of the gang included Octave Garnier, Étienne Monier, Édouard Carouy, André Soudy, and Eugène Dieudonné. In 1913 all but Bonnot were in the twenties.

d'intensité, qu'il ne peut plus supporter la vie'.³⁰ Their attacks then become a form of self-sacrifice, for they know that the guillotine awaits them. Whether their act of individual revolt is in the hopes of a revolution to come or out of despair and repulsion by society, the last words they often find the courage to utter on the edge of the scaffold are: "vive l'anarchie!".

The insurrectionist who distinguishes between revolution and revolt is an insurgent. The revolutionary's goal is all-encompassing social change, whereas the insurgent's aim is to undermine or abolish all oppressions to which they are subject and to maintain and enhance their individual autonomy.³¹ Most individualists belonged to the latter type. Indeed, the individualist-insurrectionist does not want to wait for the revolution; their revolt is immediate. There were two main historical manifestations of the insurrectionist branch of individualism, which are personified in what follows in the figures of the illegalist and the insurgent.

1. The Illegalist

Illegalism is a mode of life outside laws and conventions. Illegalists sought to break away from the dependency upon others to run their lives as freely as they could. As Levieux, one of the main proponents of illegalism stated: 'Il faut vivre le plus largement possible, le plus librement, le plus intensément possible et par tous les moyens'.³² Illegalists and other anarchists were not opposed to rules as long as these were the result of common consent. Yet, insofar as the laws in force rep-

³⁰ G. Perrot, *La Renaissance*, 20 mai 1896.

³¹ E. Armand, Ce que veulent les individualistes, *Supplément à l'en dehors*, Janvier 1932, p. 4.

³² Levieux, La légaité, *l'anarchie*, 21 janvier 1909. Levieux was the pseudonym of Michel Antoine (1858–1929), horticulturist and shopkeeper. He was also known as "N'importe qui", "Quelconque", and "Lux". He wrote under various other pseudonyms (e.g. Lejeune, Ego, Ixe, A. Vérité). Antoine wrote many articles defending illegalism in *l'anarchie* from 1908 to 1910.

resented state capitalism and favoured an elite that defended its own interests, they were viewed as fundamentally unjust. Indeed, they merely represented the domination of the strong over the weak, of the rich over the poor, of the exploiters over the exploited. To respect the law meant to submit to an unwarranted authority: ‘Le conscient, le libéré, l’affranchi, ne pouvait ... obéir à une morale qu’il désapprouve, à des lois qu’il ne connaît pas, à un régime économique antinaturel et antihumain.’³³ Hence, the law can only be a hurdle to freedom. The illegalist is an outlaw insofar as they live without regard to the law: ‘l’anarchiste n’a pas à tenir compte de la loi. Il la méprise dans son principe ; il la réprouve dans son exercice et il la combat dans ses effets’.³⁴ ‘Plus un individu sera puissant et fort, moins la légalité aura sur lui de prise. Tout lui sera permis ; rien de lui sera défendu’.³⁵ What is more, to obey the law implied relinquishing one’s moral responsibility and selfgovernment: ‘Les crétins, les avilis, les pleutres, tous les castrats inconscients veulent des lois, car ils ne savent se tracer une ligne de conduite digne, morale, humanitaire et la respecter’.³⁶ Breaking the law was thus considered a requirement for social emancipation; civil disobedience was an ethical necessity. The illegalist is both against the law and outside the law. They are a law unto themselves.

The main illegalist practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were theft, robbery, and burglary. Banks, post offices, automobiles, factories, and shops, were robbed. Swindles and counterfeiting money or stamps were also commonplace.³⁷ Anarchists did not see themselves so much as rob-

³³ Mauricius, *L’apologie du crime*, Paris, Éd. des causeries populaires, 1912, p. 6.

³⁴ Levieux, La légaité, *l’anarchie*, 21 janvier 1909.

³⁵ Levieux, Les délinquants, *l’anarchie*, 28 janvier 1909.

³⁶ Spirus-Gay, La manifestation du 1er mai 1895, *l’anarchie*, 1 février 1906.

³⁷ Méric 2010 [1926], p. 110.

Both concerns proved to be true. First, the *attentas* stunned and shocked the population.⁸⁷ Politicians as well as ordinary citizens demanded that the state take tougher measures against the libertarian threat.⁸⁸ Anonymous letters were even written to President Loubet asking him to take action in reprisal against the anarchists.⁸⁹ Finally, opponents to anarchism from all political factions used these events to demonize the movement. They eclipsed insurgents’ political motives, portraying them as ordinary criminals, if not madmen. Rather than propaganda by the deed, their acts were said to be the result of sheer folly. The terms anarchist and terrorist eventually became synonymous in the public mind. Indeed, the reverberation of dynamite resonates to this day. Second, the *attentas* led to the enactment of the *lois scélérates* (villainous law) that outlawed all apology of crime and put a halt to pretty much all anarchist propaganda.⁹⁰ Most of the anarchist press was censured and any group suspected of planning terrorist attacks could be arrested. On the night of 31 December 1893 alone the police searched 2,000 allegedly anarchist houses and 50 individuals were arrested. Hundreds of ostensible anarchists and sympathisers to the libertarian cause were tracked down.

⁸⁷ *Le Temps*, 9 novembre 1892.

⁸⁸ *Le Matin*, 9 novembre 1892.

⁸⁹ Archives nationales, F7/12516.

⁹⁰ The *lois scélérates* were passed between December 1893 and July 1894. The first law restricted freedom of the press by condemning advocacy of murder, plunder, theft, arson, all crimes involving explosive, and military disobedience. The second law condemned criminal associations [*associations de malfaiteurs*] that promoted propaganda by the deed even though no crime had effectively been committed. It also outlawed the making and possession of explosives. The third law condemned any individual, group, or journal fostering anarchist propaganda. The *lois scélérates* were only officially repealed in 1992. Anti-anarchist laws were also passed in other countries (e.g. Spain (1894–1896); Italy (1894); USA (1903 and 1907); Sweden (1906); Bulgaria (1907); Argentina (1910)).

des hommes de chairs pour les représenter. Il n’y a donc qu’un moyen d’atteindre les institutions ; c’est de frapper les hommes.⁸³

It was Henry’s bombing of the Café Terminus that was most controversial: it revealed and increased the divergences between individualists and libertarian socialists. This can be illustrated by Jean Grave claim that Henry’s act was not an anarchist act per se: ‘L’anarchie est la négation de toute autorité. Si la définition est juste, comment le fait de lancer une bombe dans un café où ne se trouvait aucun représentant quelconque de l’autorité peut-il passer pour un crime anarchiste ?’⁸⁴ Yet for Henry and other individualists, authority went well beyond official state authority. It was much more diffuse: the anarchist order included all oppressors as well as those who passively obeyed and contributed to the system’s durability. All *inconscient.e.s* were de facto blameworthy. By firing into the crowd, Henry’s act was one of self-affirmation just as much as one of individual revolt.

Mainstream anarchists argued that the main impact of these terrorist attacks was to intensify state repression and to give a fiendish image of anarchism to the public.⁸⁵ As Reclus remarked:

Si ceux qui accomplissent de semblables actes de barbarie le font dans le but de faire avancer les idées anarchistes, ils se trompent fortement. On arrivera à un tel degré de dégoût pour les compagnons, ils inspireront une telle horreur qu’on ne voudra même plus causer de l’anarchie.⁸⁶

⁸³ E. Henry, *L’Endehors*, août 1892.

⁸⁴ J. Grave, *La libre parole*, 8 mars 1894.

⁸⁵ Malato, *Matin*, 28 février 1894.

⁸⁶ E. Reclus, *Le Travail*, 28 avril 1894.

bers, thieves, or burglars as expropriators. *La reprise individuelle* (individual reclamation), as the practice came to be known, was intended to be a re-appropriation of wealth. It was believed that theft was the best way to undermine capitalist society.

Illegalists sought to emancipate themselves in their ordinary, everyday life from all forms of unjustified authority. To this end, they began to challenge and demolish all layers of the established social order, be they economic, political, or moral. This meant a rejection of property, the state, religion, the military, family, and so on. All acts aimed at undermining or eradicating bourgeois institutions were regarded as revolutionary acts and, as such, were praised and encouraged.³⁸ The first manifestation of propaganda by the deed revolved around non-violent direct actions. These included organizing marches with the homeless, building a kit house in the Tuileries gardens for an evicted family, squatting public buildings, or eating at restaurants without paying.³⁹

The illegalist sometimes played the role of a jester. Their actions could be mischievous and aimed at mocking and ridiculing the social order. Many were charged with public indecency (*outrage aux moeurs*) and disorderly conduct (*trouble à l’ordre public*). For example, an illegalist trained his dog to steal food to create a diversion so that he could in turn help himself.⁴⁰ These actions may not have been very impactful, but they had the merit of troubling the status quo. They affirmed a way of life based on irreverence and disrespect of bourgeois values and rules. As such, they maintained one’s insurgent spirit and kept the insurrectionary flame alive.

It is through controversies over the legitimacy of such acts, especially theft, that individualists first entered in conflict with

³⁸ Dhavernas 1981, pp. 210–4.

³⁹ For further examples, see *L’avant garde cosmopolite*, n. 7, 16–22 juillet 1887.

⁴⁰ R. Maîtrejean, *Souvenirs d’anarchie*, Baye, la digitale, 1888 [1913], p. 17.

the rest of the anarchist movement. Illegalism was a source of division amongst early anarchists. Whilst mainstream anarchists such as Kropotkin and Jean Grave by and large condemned the practice, individualists defended and advocated it.⁴¹ Indeed, many individualists took part in illegal activities themselves. Some individualists defended criminals. Libertad believed that counterfeiters should be considered allies: ‘les faux-monnayeurs peuvent être nos amis ... Nous acceptons le cousinage direct avec nos camarades faux-monnayeurs’.⁴² Armand saw the transgressor as a vector of social evolution.⁴³ ‘Outlaws, marginal, bandits – they are the only ones who dare assert their right to life’ wrote Victor Serge.⁴⁴ The central disputed question was: is illegalism merely a way to satisfy one’s individual needs or can it be an effective revolutionary tactic?

Theft was the rejection of private propriety. Expropriation was intended to create breaches in society to destroy the capitalist order. As a police report stated: ‘Pour ses partisans, le vol est la manifestation même du sentiment de révolte qui existe chez l’homme, contre la propriété individuelle’.⁴⁵ ‘Ainsi, en cambriolant, vous prétendez faire œuvre de révolutionnaire ?’ asked a lawyer, ‘Parfaitement’ answered the virtuoso burglar Alexandre Marius Jacob.⁴⁶

Prenez et pillez, ceci est à vous ... montrer l’exemple, se mettre immédiatement à reprendre aux riches ... pratiquons le droit de reprise et ne

⁴¹ *Le Révolté*, n. 6, 9, 11, 1891.

⁴² Libertad, À propos des faux monnayeurs, *l’anarchie*, 6 juin 1907.

⁴³ E. Armand, Le transgresseur est-il un facteur d’évolution?, *E. Armand. Sa vie, sa pensée, son œuvre*, pp. 392–401.

⁴⁴ Le Rétif, Anarchists and Criminals, cited in *Disruptive Elements of French Anarchism*, Berkeley, Ardent Press, 2014, p. 88.

⁴⁵ Cited in Manfredonia 1984, p. 429. Ba 76.

⁴⁶ A. M. Jacob, Souvenirs d’un révolté, *Alexandre Marius Jacob, Travailleurs de la nuit*, Montreuil, L’insomniaque, 2011 [1905], p. 121.

tendances généreuses du cœur, au libre essor de la pensée’; his faith revolution: ‘Nous marcherons toujours en avant jusqu’à ce que la révolution, but de nos efforts, vienne couronner notre œuvre en faisant le monde libre’; and his unwavering individualism:

Je ne relève que d’un tribunal, de moi-même, et le verdict de tout autre m’est indifférent ... dans cette guerre sans pitié que nous avons déclaré à la bourgeoisie, nous ne demandons aucune pitié.

Nous donnons la mort, nous saurons aussi la subir.⁷⁸

Mainstream libertarians condemned these attacks. Their perpetrators were dismissed as criminals and madmen.⁷⁹ As Zaïkowska noted: ‘Les révolutionnaires en chambre ont traité de fous, de mouchards les propagandistes de la période héroïque’.⁸⁰ Jean Grave, Merlino, or Mirbeau all decried bombings and assassinations. ‘Ravachol? Mais il n’est pas des nôtres et nous le répudions’ stated Merlino.⁸¹ Some even claimed that the attacks were orchestrated by the police to discredit the movement.⁸² Conversely, individualists defended bombings and assassinations as instances of individual initiative. Some claimed that it was morally warranted to target individuals and not merely institutions:

Il est vrai que les hommes ne sont que le produit des institutions, mais ces institutions sont des choses abstraites qui n’existent que tant qu’il y a

⁷⁸ E. Henry, Déclaration d’Émile Henry à son procès, *Mourir oui mais en dansant*, Piratcats éditions, 2018 [1894].

⁷⁹ O. Mirbeau, *Journal*, 28 avril 1894.

⁸⁰ S. Zaïkowska, *La Vie anarchiste*, n. 8, 20 mars 1912.

⁸¹ Merlino, *L’Éclair*, 7 avril 1892.

⁸² Badier 2007, p. 123.

gents. The intellectual interested in spiritism who might have studied at the *École Polytechnique* joined the team of the prominent individualist journal *L'Endehors* in 1892 when he was only twenty years old.⁷³ He was a *déclassé* – ‘déserteur de la bourgeoisie’ as Zo d’Axa, the founder *L'Endehors*, put it. Unlike other insurgents such as Ravachol who targeted specific individuals and decried “causalities”,⁷⁴ Émile Henry aimed to harm as many people as possible.⁷⁵ For Henry, no-one was innocent; the masses were also to blame for their indifference and responsible or their voluntary servitude:

Devons-nous nous attaquer seulement aux députés qui font les lois contre nous, aux magistrats qui appliquent ces lois, aux policiers qui nous arrêtent ? Je ne pense pas ... Les bons bourgeois ... doivent avoir leur part de représailles. Et non seulement eux, mais encore tous ceux qui sont satisfaits de l’ordre actuel ...⁷⁶

Henry used his trial as an instrument of propaganda. His made a resounding statement explaining his actions for which he expressed no remorse whatever. The text was widely circulated amongst anarchist circles. It was also reproduced in various newspapers and translated into several languages.⁷⁷ It expresses Henry’s hatred of society: ‘cette société, où tout est bas, tout est louche, tout est laid, où tout est une entrave à l’épanchement des passions humaines, aux

⁷³ Archives de la Préfecture de police, BA 1115.

⁷⁴ Cf. P. Bouchardon, Ravachol et Cie, Paris, Hachette, 1931, p. 109.

⁷⁵ Cf. H. Varennes, De Ravachol à Caserio, Paris, Garnier, 1895; A. Bataille, Quand on jugeait les anarchistes, Cahors, La Louve Édition, 2015.

⁷⁶ E. Henry, Déclaration d’Émile Henry à son procès, *Gazettes des Tribunaux*, 29 avril 1894.

⁷⁷ Archives de la Préfecture de police, BA 79, 30 avril 1894, 11 mai 1894. Note that it is still read today. A fanzine containing Henry’s trial statement was printed in 2016.

craignons qu’une chose : ne pouvoir le pratiquer assez pour le triomphe de la révolution.⁴⁷

Prendre est un besoin naturel qui s’impose lorsqu’une fraction de la société se permet de dire ceci est à nous ... Ouvrier !, vole, c’est ton devoir.⁴⁸

The thief was thus seen as a morally emancipated individual. As the writer Georges Darien wrote in his famous novel *Le Voleur*: ‘je conçois [le voleur] ... comme une créature symbolique à l’allure mystérieuse ... un individu possédant une moralité spéciale qui lui enlève la notion ... de l’organisation capitaliste.’⁴⁹

Illegalism may be said to have begun in 1886 with the trial of Clément Duval who stole jewels from a rich lady and accidentally set fire to her flat.⁵⁰ He stabbed the policeman who tried to arrest him claiming that it was an act of self-defence insofar as he was being attacked by a representative of an unjust law. During his interrogation, he overtly defended his anarchist motives for individual reclamation: ‘je suis de l’avis que les parasites ne devraient pas posséder de bijoux tandis que les travailleurs, les producteurs, n’ont pas de pain.’⁵¹ Yet the most famous illegalist is undoubtedly Alexandre Marius Jacob

⁴⁷ *Ça ira*, n. 9, décembre 1888.

⁴⁸ Le droit à l’existence, *L’international*, n. 3 juillet 1890.

⁴⁹ G. Darien, *Le Voleur*, Paris, Stock, 1898, p. 98.

⁵⁰ Clément Duval came from working-class background. After having fought in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 he worked as a mechanic in a Parisian factory. He lost his job in 1878 due to ill health. From then on, he stole as a matter of survival. After a year in jail he became an active anarchist propagandist amongst the working classes. He sentenced to hard labour for life in 1887. He escaped in 1901 and emigrated to the USA where he died in 1935. See C. Duval, *Moi, Clément Duval, bagnard et anarchiste*, M. Enckell (ed.), Paris, nada éditions, 2019 [1929].

⁵¹ A. Bonnanno, Le problème du vol : Clément Duval, *Salto, subversion & anarchie*, n. 3, septembre 2013.

(who is sometimes thought to have been a source of inspiration for Maurice Leblanc's character Arsène Lupin).⁵² He formed a group known as "*les Travailleurs de la nuit*" that stole exclusively from people whom they viewed as parasitic to society such as bosses, magistrates, the military, private hotels, jewellery shops, and various *rentiers*. For the same reason, they also plundered churches as well as state buildings. Marius Jacob donated most of the loot to the anarchist cause and lived quite modestly. Over a period of three years he and his accomplices committed over 150 burglaries all over France and even abroad. Arrested in 1903, the 26-year-old Jacob used his trial to defend illegalism. He made a statement that was read widely in anarchist circles:

La société ne m'accorde que trois moyens d'existence : le travail, la mendicité et le vol. Le travail, loin de me répugner, me plaît ... Ce qui m'a répugné, c'est de suer sang et eau pour l'aumône d'un salaire, c'est de créer des richesses dont je suis frustré ... La mendicité, c'est l'avilissement, la négation de toute dignité. Tout homme a droit au banquet de la vie.

Le droit de vivre ne se mendie pas, il se prend.

Le vol c'est la restitution, la reprise de possession.

Je me livrai au vol sans aucun scrupule. Je ne coupe pas dans votre prétendue morale, qui prône le respect de la propriété comme une vertu, alors

⁵² Alexandre Marius Jacob was born in Marseille in 1879. His father was a ship's baker and cook. Jacob travelled to New Caledonia as a ship's boy at age 11. 'J'ai vu le monde et il n'est pas beau' reported Jacob, having witnessed all sorts of human trafficking as well as the privileges of the upper classes cruising around the world. He was sentenced to hard labour for life in 1905 for theft and murder. He was released in 1927 and killed himself in 1954. Cf. J-M. Delpech, *Voleur et anarchiste – Alexandre Marius Jacob*, Paris, nada éditions, 2015.

nounced him worked, was bombed three weeks after his arrest. Ravachol was executed a couple of months later. He quickly became regarded as a martyr of anarchy and was a source of inspiration for future insurgents. A second series of terrorist attacks took place between November 1893 and June 1894. In November 1893 Léon-Jules Léauthier stabbed the Serbian ambassador whilst he was having lunch in a restaurant.⁷⁰ A month later August Vaillant threw a bomb into the Parliamentary auditorium in the Palais Bourbon as the Chamber was about to vote on new laws against anarchist propaganda.⁷¹ In the following months bombings targeted a duke's hotel, a famous bourgeois café, and a restaurant opposite the Senate. This period of terrorism culminated with the assassination of President Sadi Carnot by the twenty-year-old Italian baker Sante Caserio in June 1894.⁷²

Most of these attacks targeted specific individuals. A notable exception is the case of Émile Henry, who detonated a bomb at the Café Terminus in the Saint-Lazare station, and who was probably (at least in part) responsible for the bomb that detonated in a police station, the bloodiest attack of the period, causing five deaths. Henry was not like other insur-

⁷⁰ Léauthier was a jobless cobbler who, at age 19, stabbed the first bourgeois he could find with his skiving-knife. Sentenced to hard labour in Guyane, he died in 1895 during a convict revolt. Cf. Y. Frémion, *Léauthier l'anarchiste*, Paris, L'Échappée, 2011.

⁷¹ The bomb was intended to injure several people, but not to kill anyone. H. Varennes, *De Ravachol à Caserio*, Paris, Garnier, 1891, p. 115.

⁷² This assassination was committed in part to avenge Vaillant and Henry.

Note that anarchist "terrorist" attacks continued in other countries all over the world. The Spanish Prime Minister Cánovas del Castillo was shot by Michele Angiolillo in 1897; The Empress Elizabeth of Austria was stabbed in 1898; Umberto I, King of Italy, was shot dead by Gaetano Bresci in 1900; in 1901 Léon Czolgosz assassinated William MacKinley, President of the USA; Gennardo Rubino attempted to murder the King of Belgium, Leopold II; In 1909 Simon Radowitzky detonated a bomb that killed Ramón Lorenzo Falcón, head of police, in Argentina.

acts of propaganda by deed in the 1880s. The first wave of anarchist terrorism in France was truly launched with the bombings that took place between 1892 and 1894.⁶⁶ Anarchists bombings detonated in fashionable neighbourhoods and boulevards of the west of Paris. They were political vendettas that targeted symbols of the bourgeois and capitalist order. They were also often acts of vengeance against prior repression. The vicious cycle of events was as follows: political vendetta – repression – vengeance – repression or as the poet and journalist André Salmon graphically put it: ‘une tête, une bombe ... une tête, une bombe’.⁶⁷

Four bombings occurred in about a month between February and March 1892. They targeted a private hotel, a magistrate’s manor house, the Republican guardhouse, the five-story residence of a magistrate who had condemned anarchists to death. It only took a few days for Ravachol,⁶⁸ the author of the two bombing against the magistrates, to be caught.⁶⁹ The restaurant Véry where the waiter that de-

⁶⁶ These bombings only caused nine deaths, which is less, for example, than the number of strikers killed by the government during May Day protests at the time.

⁶⁷ A. Salmon, *La terreur noire*, Paris, L’Échappée, 2008, p. 291.

⁶⁸ Ravachol (Francois Koenigstein) was born in the Loire region in 1859. He was abandoned by his Dutch father when he was eight. He worked as a servant, shepherd, coalminer, and coppersmith before training as a dyer’s apprentice from 13 to 16, regularly working 13 hours a day. Fired for his job in Lyon because of his anarchist convictions, he stole hens and played the accordion to scrape by. By the time he was 30 he started smuggling alcohol, counterfeiting money, and burgling. He vandalized a baroness’s grave in hopes of finding jewellery and murdered a 93-year-old hermit. He was guillotined in 1892. Ravachol practiced free love. He was in an open relationship with a married woman called Bénédicte. Ravachol, *Mémoires suivi de Déclaration au procès du 21 juin 1982*, Saint-Didier, Éditions l’Escalier, 2010 [1892], pp. 46–7.

⁶⁹ The *avocat général* Bulot had sentenced three anarchists, Descamps, Dardare, and Leveillé to death who were arrested whilst protesting on May Day 1891. The *conseillé* Benoit, who presided over the trial, discharged Leveillé and sentenced Descamps five in jail, and Dardare to three.

qu’en réalité il n’y a de pires voleurs que les propriétaires.

J’ai préféré conserver ma liberté, mon indépendance, ma dignité d’homme, que me faire l’artisan de la fortune d’un maître. En termes plus crus, ... j’ai préféré être voleur que volé.

Je n’ai usé du vol que comme moyen de révolte propre à combattre le plus inique de tous les vols : la propriété individuelle.⁵³

Jacob took full responsibility for his actions and the risks they involved: ‘Ne reconnaissant à personne le droit de me juger, je n’implore ni pardon, ni indulgence ... disposez de moi comme vous l’entendez ; envoyez-moi au bagne, à l’échafaud, peut m’importe’.⁵⁴ It is clear that individualists like Jacob were not so much burglars as expropriators.

The illegalist milieu also attracted people that were neither anarchist nor individualist: ‘The group [individualist anarchists] ... attracted a number of ordinary criminals’.⁵⁵

Tout ce que les bas-fonds comptaient d’irréguliers, individus sans morale et traîne-savates, se trouvent fondé à fraterniser avec les anarchistes individualistes ... ces gens s’incrustaient dans nos locaux et prétendaient représenter notre idéal parce qu’ils défiaient l’ordre et la loi.⁵⁶

Many pointed out that the gains of illegalism did not outweigh its perils. Illegalists ran the risk of falling into much

⁵³ A. M. Jacob, Pourquoi j’ai cambriolé, *Alexandre Marius Jacob, Travailleurs de la nuit*, Montreuil, L’insomniaque, 2011 [1905]. Cf. *Germinal*, 19–25 mars 1905, pp. 17–22.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The Paris “Bandits”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1912, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Mauricius, mémoires, P-V. Berthier (ed.), 1974. Cited in Steiner 2008, 171.

greater servitude than wage labour, namely prison or forced labour. Illegalism, as Mauricius wrote, 'ne libérait pas l'homme mais le rendait en Cours d'Assises'.⁵⁷ Similarly, Marius Jacob stated :

Si par [l'illégalisme], [l'individu] réussit à s'affranchir de quelques servitudes, l'inégalité de la lutte lui en suscite d'autres encore plus lourdes avec au out la perte de liberté, de la mince liberté dont il jouissait et parfois de la vie.⁵⁸

What is more, illegalism never yielded much profit. The individualist Louis Maîtrejean, for instance, earned 10 francs per day as a saddler and barely made three times as much in an entire week counterfeiting money.⁵⁹ All in all, illegalist propaganda was little more than acts of *débrouillardise* by individuals trying to cheat the system to eke out a living. It was more a matter of getting by without having to submit to social norms. Few were those who carried out actions on a larger scale that could jeopardize the capitalist order. Eventually, most illegalists were caught by the authorities. They ended up serving long sentences in jail, were sent to labour camps, or were sentenced to death. Rather than prefiguring the world wherein they wished to live, illegalists were dependent upon a system that they wanted to destroy.⁶⁰ Whatever freedom they found was precarious, to say the least. In and of itself, illegalism was no more than a pis aller; it brought neither social nor individual emancipation.

⁵⁷ Mauricius, Confession, *l'anarchie*, 31 août 1911.

⁵⁸ A.M. Jacob, Statement made on 4 septembre 1948.

⁵⁹ R. Maîtrejean, *Souvenirs d'anarchie*, Baye, La digitale, 1988 [1913], p. 13. See also p. 32.

⁶⁰ Cf. E. Armand, *L'illégaliste anarchiste est-il notre camarade ?* Paris, Ed. de *l'en dehors*, p. 11; G. Butaud, *La Vie Anarchiste*, n. 12, 15 juin 1912.

2. The Insurgent

The insurgent believes in violent propaganda by the deed as spontaneous revolutionary action. Acts of propaganda by the deed were meant to be catalysts that would bring about social upheaval. Anarchists' objective was to stir up revolution by inciting the masses to insurrection. As Jean Grave wrote: 'Tous ... nous rêvions bombes attentats, actes "éclatants" capables de saper la société bourgeoise'.⁶¹ Similarly, Émile Henry declared: 'nous accueillons avec bonheur tous les actes énergiques de révolte contre la bourgeoisie, car nous ne perdons pas de vue que la révolution ne sera que la résultante de toutes ces révoltes particulières'.⁶²

The first symbolic act of violence by an insurgent was committed in June 1881. A bomb exploded the statue of Adolphe Thiers, the communards' persecutor. An international anarchist congress took place in London a month later. It declared propaganda by the deed to be the most effective means of struggle:

Il est de stricte nécessité de faire tous les efforts possibles pour propager par des actes, l'idée révolutionnaire et l'esprit de révolte dans cette grande faction de la masse populaire qui ne prend pas encore une part active au mouvement ...⁶³

Individualists and other anarchists actively promoted the use of violence. Bomb-making instruction manuals and sabotage techniques were disseminated in pamphlets.⁶⁴ During festivals, a tombola was sometimes held with such prizes as guns, pistols, and hunting knives.⁶⁵ Yet there were only four violent

⁶¹ J. Grave, *Le mouvement libertaire sous la IIIe République*, Paris, Stock, 1930, p. 15.

⁶² E. Henry, *L'Endehors*, août 1892.

⁶³ *Le Révolté*, n. 11, 23 juillet 1881.

⁶⁴ E.g. *L'International*, 1 mai 1890.

⁶⁵ Maitron 1975, p. 207.

modern and scientific societies where deemed fountainheads of degeneration.²⁸⁹

Naturism shows that some fringes of individualism in the interwar period became less concerned with political action and gradually more about introspection. As hope to influence the masses and society at large was declining, the tradition came to be more self-contained and moved further away from the rest of anarchist movement. As a matter of fact, their organization sometimes looked more like that of a bohemian sect than that of a social movement. Individualists were concerned not so much with the good society as with the good life. Personal change took precedence over social change.

It must be acknowledged that there may have been a certain degree of escapism in individualist naturism. Nature was seen as means of salvation and a way to flee from the degenerateness of civilization.²⁹⁰ Weber argues that there is correlation between depoliticization and salvation religion.

The (enforced or deliberate) withdrawal of socially privileged intellectuals from political participation parallels the rise of salvation narratives that are ‘anti-political, pacifist, and world-rejecting’.²⁹¹ This intellectualist attitude tends to display indifference to social issues; it concerns itself primarily with one’s own condition:

The ruling strata come to consider their intellectual training in its ultimate intellectual and psychological consequences far more important for

²⁸⁹ H. Bigot, Opposition aux civilisateurs, *La Nouvelle Humanité*, mars-avril 1896.

²⁹⁰ Arnaud Baubérot (2004, p. 216) suggests that many individualists were frustrated intellectual who could not translate their cultural capital into a satisfying social position. Naturism was their way to view themselves as belonging to a wise and clear-sighted elite.

²⁹¹ Weber 1978 [1922], pp. 503–4.

Yet art, it was argued, could also be revolutionary insofar as it could make one aware of one’s social condition and gave free rein to one’s imagination and creativity. This is why the artist, the intellectual, or the *litterateur* could be considered more effective in changing people’s minds and hearts than the terrorist:

La poésie, en tant qu’acte créateur, est révolutionnaire. C’est une forme d’action directe qui met en cause l’ordre établi par le simple fait qu’elle affirme la dignité, la liberté et la puissance créatrice de beauté de l’artiste en face à la laideur stérile du présent.¹⁴²

For literary individualists, artists were the genuine existential revolutionaries: ‘La vraie bombe’, as Mallarmé declared, ‘c’est le livre’.¹⁴³

[Le littérateur] procède intellectuellement ; il ne dynamite pas ; il n’en a pas même l’idée ; écrit ; l’encre et son explosif unique ; son engin, lorsqu’il éclate, ne projette que des phrases ; les dégâts qu’il cause sont psychologiques ; il n’y a d’endommagé que la cervelle du lecteur.¹⁴⁴

Camille Mauclair provided an illuminating and comprehensive account of literary anarchoindividualism:

Théoriciens du Beau, dévoués par notre intime passion à la coordination des éléments esthétiques épars dans le monde, nous puisons en cet

¹⁴² Aubery 1969, p. 26. Cf. *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, avril 1892, pp. 149–51.

¹⁴³ Mallarmé, cited in C. Mauclair, *Servitude et Grandeur littéraires*, Paris, Ollendorf, 1922, p. 116.

¹⁴⁴ E. de Saint-Auban, *L’Idée sociale au théâtre*, Paris, Stock, 1904 [1901], p. 41.

amour même, si exclusif et hautain, des idées pures, le sentiment d'une anarchie. En face d'un gouvernement despotique, notre impatience du joug et notre haine nous dressent. En face d'un pouvoir constitutionnel où les responsabilités se divisent et s'atténuent, notre ennui nous érige. En face d'un socialisme partageur et tyrannisant l'individu sous le droit de la masse, notre conscience de personnalités supérieures nous soulève. Ainsi nous ne pouvons être qu'anarchistes. Voilà pourquoi nous sommes anarchistes et pourquoi il est équitable, logique, nécessaire que nous le soyons. Poètes, dramaturges, romanciers, approfondissant et héroïsant l'individu, nous sommes les ouvriers conscients et les fermes progressistes de l'anarchie. Nous naissons royalistes pour le règne du Moi : rebelles aux lois, rebelles aux influences des âmes voisines, dévotieux aux seules notions Idéales, au-dessus de nous et nos déesses à nous !¹⁴⁵

Finally, it is worth noting that literary praises of acts of violence were not always hyperbolic or metaphorical. Insurrectionary and literary anarchism were sometimes intimately connected. Some artists were the perpetrators of bombings. Félix Fénéon, for instance, bombed the Foyot restaurant in 1894. With a pen or a brush in one hand and stick of dynamite in the other, the bomb-thrower and the *littérateur* could be one and the same.

In summary, literary individualism had little in common with mainstream anarchism. As part of the cultural scene of fin-de-siècle Paris, anarchism was embraced by fashionable and snobbish society for promoting originality and individu-

¹⁴⁵ C. Mauclair, Esquisse d'un état d'esprit, *La revue anarchiste*, n. 4-5, 15/31 octobre 1893.

civilisé, mais des préjugés les plus sots et des coutumes les plus ridicules'.²⁸⁵

In other words, nudism enabled one to become more independent from conventional and religious morality: 'Le nu finira par vaincre l'hostilité des moralistes et l'hypocrisie des religions.'²⁸⁶ Finally, nudism brought about greater equality insofar as it erased external symbols of power that maintained class divisions.²⁸⁷ Embracing nudism and no longer experiencing feelings of shame and prudery was one of the signs that one has successfully managed to change one's perspective and attitude: 'il faut que la mentalité humaine se transforme du tout au tout pour que le nudisme devienne une réalité'.²⁸⁸ Though the re-appropriation and affirmation of one's physical self, nudism was an individualist practice of self-transformation.

In conclusion, the naturian and naturist movements shaped a faction of the individualist subculture after the Great War. Although these movements strayed beyond the bounds of the anarchist milieu, individualists were not mere trend followers: they were leading proponents of these new "revolutionary" practices. Individualist naturianism may have been somewhat naïve, yet it nonetheless constituted a radical critique of civilization combined with a hope for another, feral world – an arcadia far away from the alienating factories of industrial capitalism. It was also a critique of the alleged superiority of "civilized" cultures over "primitive" ones, and thus indirectly posed a challenge to the authority of Western countries over the rest of the world. Primitives and indigenous societies came to be seen as paradigms of the good life, whereas

²⁸⁵ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *l'en dehors*, décembre 1928.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ According to Armand, nudism also leads to better camaraderie, which may be, albeit not necessarily, sexual. See E. Armand, Le Nudisme révolutionnaire, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁸⁸ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *l'en dehors*, décembre 1928.

Nudism

Nudism was another aspect of naturism. Several individualists advocated nudism, which had been introduced in France by the physical education teacher Marcel Kienné de Mongeot in his 1926 magazine *Vivre intégralement*.²⁸⁰ Nudism was first promoted by contributors to *l'En dehors* in the late 1920s. Some praised it as a practice that insured health, comfort, and beauty.²⁸¹ Others had more political motives for nudism: they saw it as no less than a revolutionary act. 'Le nu fait partie des revendications révolutionnaires les plus pressantes' claimed Lacaze-Duthiers.²⁸² Armand and Lacaze-Duthiers were two of the leading proponents of revolutionary nudism. Their argument was basically fourfold. First, it allowed one to use one's body as one saw fit: 'revendiquer la faculté de vivre nu ... c'est affirmer son droit à l'entière disposition de son individualité corporelle'.²⁸³ Second, it allowed one to retrieve one's natural state, as opposed to the civilized and socially conditioned physical self. This also implied rejecting the hierarchy between body parts deemed socially acceptable that are exposed, and those regarded as taboo that are concealed.²⁸⁴ Third, it meant disregarding social norms and prejudices, and opposing the anarchist order:

'Se mettre nu ... c'est faire acte d'insoumission et de révolte du moment que l'autorité s'oppose à ce droit. Celui qui préconise le nu se met en dehors, non seulement de tous les codes des sociétés dites

²⁸⁰ For further discussion on the naturist movement, see A. Baubérot, *Anarchistes individualistes et réforme des modes de vie, Histoire du naturisme*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

²⁸¹ E.g. J. Rouquet, 'Éloge de la nudité', *l'en dehors*, n. 194–195, 15 novembre 1930.

²⁸² G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *l'en dehors*, décembre 1928.

²⁸³ E. Armand, 'Le Nudisme révolutionnaire', *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁸⁴ See also R. Dunan, 'Le nudisme, revendication révolutionnaire?', *l'en dehors*, n. 148–149, décembre 1928.

ality.¹⁴⁶ It was primarily a state of mind or an attitude, not a social doctrine. As Mauclair explicitly wrote: 'Je vois dans l'anarchisme moins une réforme sociale qu'une orientation nouvelle de l'éthique ... L'anarchie n'est pas la recherche d'une organisation économique, mais dans un état nouveau de l'individu'.¹⁴⁷ Literary anarchism was by and large purely aesthetic: its proponents were not radical activists so much as aesthetes and political dilettantes. Anarchy was for art's sake, not the other way around. Artists treated the anarchist spirit as they treated new artistic movements. Their anarchist tendencies rarely translated into political activism. Overall, artists did not concern themselves with society at large; they had no revolutionary aspirations. For them, the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes was at best a secondary concern, at worst, a source of mockery. *Littérateurs'* chief (and sometimes only) preoccupation was the free expression of their individual creativity. It thus comes as no surprise that the collaboration and solidarity between the artistic avant-garde and insurrectionist-anarchists did not last long. The enthusiasm of most literary figures for anarchism turned out to be little more than a political infatuation. Once the anarchist fad of the early 1890s had receded, very few renowned artists remained part of the movement. In fact, further to the brutal governmental repression of 1893 and 1894, many were those who disowned it altogether and even denied having ever had any connection to anarchism. The artistic, in particular symbolist, appropriation of anarchist ideas was nonetheless significant.¹⁴⁸ The recognition that art could transform people

¹⁴⁶ See Carassus, *Le Snobisme et les lettres françaises*, p. 362.

¹⁴⁷ C. Mauclair, 'Esquisse d'un état d'esprit', *La revue anarchiste*, n. 4–5, 15/31 octobre 1893.

¹⁴⁸ For further discussion, see R. D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siècle France*; Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989; P. McGuinness, *Poetry and Radical Politics in Fin de Siècle France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015.

on a deeper existential level – and that this was, in and of itself, a revolutionary act – chimed in perfectly with the individualist anarchist process of emancipation. Although personal transformation and self-creation was artists' primary goal, some of them also embraced the insurrectionist and (to a lesser extent) constructivist branches of individualism.

A new kind of aesthetic anarchism flourished from 1895 onwards. Although avant-garde artists no longer identified with libertarian socialism, individualist anarchism retained its appeal. However, these artists-cum-individualists no longer subscribed to the more anti-social and elitist doctrines of their forerunners. They argued that art has the potential to change and improve all individuals. These new aesthetic-individualist ideas were promoted in journals such as *Harmonie*, *L'enclos*, and *La Revue Rouge*.

The most noteworthy exemplars of this trend can be found in the work of Gérard Lacaze-Duthiers. In an 1896 essay on libertarian aesthetics entitled '*L'idéal humain de l'art*', Lacaze-Duthiers, described an aristocratic ideal which consisted of turning one's life into a work of art.¹⁴⁹ In his view, art is the highest ideal, the greatest good. Art is not confined to the aesthetic sphere; it also has a moral dimension. The artist is not only the creator of works of art, but also strives to become a more beautiful individual and to spread beauty through one's acts. In Lacaze-Duthiers's own words:

J'ai donné le nom d' « artistocratie » à l'anarchie envisagé au point de vue esthétique et à l'esthétique envisagée au point de vue anarchiste. L'artistocratie était une théorie anarchiste de l'art, expression suprême de la liberté, impliquant la

¹⁴⁹ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *L'idéal humain de l'art : Essai d'esthétique libertaire*, Rheims, *Revue littéraire de Paris et de Champagne*, 1906.

wanted to remain omnivorous or flexitarians and those who swore by a strict vegan diet.²⁷⁹

Like naturianism, anarcho-individualist veganism had little impact on the rest of the anarchist movement and still less on society at large. The number of individualist vegans never exceeded a few dozen individuals. Although several hundred people visited vegan colonies such as Bascon and Terre Liberée, very few settled there and adopted a long-term plant-based diet. The history of anarchoindividualist veganism is practically unknown by the anarchist movement itself. In fact, when French anarchists began writing about environmentalism in the 1970s and veganism in the 1990s no reference was made to their individualist predecessors in the first half of the twentieth century. Neonaturians and other vegan individualist are the forgotten predecessors of the ecological and animal liberation movements.

In summary, for individualist anarchists, veganism was first and foremost a matter of personal emancipation through preserving one's health, gaining economic independence, and working towards moral regeneration. It was part and parcel of their aspiration to lead a simpler life, free from unnecessary possessions, and more in line with their instincts. Some individualists also defended the inherent value of animal life and opposed all forms of animal exploitation. Finally, anarchists did not think so much in terms of the ecological impact of the production of animal source foods as in terms of their aspiration to live in harmony with nature. Influenced by the broader naturist and hygienist movements, anarcho-vegans' primary aim was to recover a natural way of life in opposition to the alienation and degeneration produced by industrial civilization.

²⁷⁹ There were also petty disagreements between vegan individualists, especially between Rimbault and friends of the *Néo-Naturien* and Butaud and Zaïkowska and followers of the *Végétalien*.

Veganism allowed individualists to reconsider their place on earth. As Butaud stressed: '[le végétalisme n'est] pas seulement un régime d'hygiène, mais une base sociale permettant à l'individu de vivre selon les lois naturelles'.²⁷⁵ Vegan anarchists did not merely follow natural laws for the sake of personal growth; it was a way for them to reconcile themselves with the rest of the natural world.

Finally, it should be noted that veganism was not embraced unanimously by individualists. In fact, it was occasionally a source of conflict rather than a rallying point. Dietary difference was one of the main reasons for the dissolution of Rimbault's first colony in Pavillons-sous-Bois, which could not afford the expenditure incurred by the purchase of non-vegan food products.²⁷⁶ At the *milieu libre du Quai de la Pie*, vegetarians and omnivores ate their meals separately.²⁷⁷ When living together in the urban colony of Romainville, members of *l'anarchie* quarrelled over dietary issues. Lorulot wanted to enforce a strict vegetarian diet that Rirette Maîtrejean and Victor Serge refused to adopt. Similarly, Butaud argued with Beylie at the Vaux colony over oysters that the latter had bought from a communist cooperative.²⁷⁸ Many individualists, such as the leading propagandist E. Armand, were in favour of veganism but did not want to impose it on anyone. They thought that the rigid dietary restrictions advocated by individuals such as Butaud, Zaïkowska, Lorulot, and Rimbault were dogmatic. Indeed, their obsession with hygiene and healthy eating was sometimes seen as a form of orthorexia nervosa. In sum, the question of diet created divisions in anarchist ranks between those who

²⁷⁵ G. Butaud, *L'individualisme conduit au robinsonisme, Le végétalisme permet le communisme*, 1929.

²⁷⁶ L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 16, février 1924.

²⁷⁷ H. Zisly, Pâques communiste, *Les Réfractaires*, avril-mai 1914.

²⁷⁸ Bulletin mensuel de la colonie communiste « Le Milieu libre de Vaux », avril-mai 1904.

révolte constante de l'artiste contre toutes les formes de laideur.¹⁵⁰

For Lacaze-Duthiers, the artist and the anarchist are one and the same. The struggle against injustice is concomitant with (rather than subservient to) the urge to fight against ugliness. The state of anarchy is that of beauty and harmony. As we read in the *Revue Rouge*:

Nous haïssons tout asservissement ... nous l'écartons comme anti-poétique. En ce sens nous sommes libertaires ... Nous suivons notre nature en hurlant notre révolte et en tâchant de doter la Société de notre idéal de beauté morale et artistique.¹⁵¹

Only the individual who steps out of society can be an artistocrat: 'Ce n'est pas la masse qui pourra jamais réaliser l'aristocratie, mais l'être isolé dans la masse, qui s'en détache pour penser et agir par lui-même'.¹⁵² For Lacaze-Duthiers, art, like anarchy, must begin with the individual: 'Tout progrès consiste dans l'effort de l'individu pour être soi-même. Tout progrès réside dans ce qui l'individu ajoute de poésie et d'art à sa vie pour la vivre plus intensément'.¹⁵³

La forme individuelle de [l'action directe] a pour terrain l'homme lui-même. Elle consiste dans l'évolution intérieure de l'individu, dans la violence qu'il exerce sur lui-même, dans son effort pour se surmonter, s'embellir et devenir meilleur,

¹⁵⁰ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *Aristocratie*, S. Faure p. 145.

¹⁵¹ G. Longlet, J. Heyne, & M. Devaldès, *La Revue Rouge*, janvier 1896, n. 1.

¹⁵² G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *Aristocratie*, juin 1939, p. 1.

¹⁵³ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, du vrai progrès, *Supplément à l'en dehors*, 15 août 1932.

dans la guerre qu'il livre à ses passions, dans la victoire qu'il remporte chaque jour sur la laideur. Les résultats de cette Action directe sont positifs. L'art, la pensée, les livres aident l'individu à se découvrir ; ils le révèlent à lui-même. Ils agissent directement sur sa conscience, pour la réformer, l'augmenter, la fortifier.¹⁵⁴

Lacaze-Duthiers did not fall prey to the elitism of earlier literary individualists. His aristocracy was primarily one of the mind and was open to anyone:¹⁵⁵ 'Il y a dans tout homme un aristocrate qui s'ignore, qui condamne la part médiocre de lui-même. C'est cet aristocrate qui doit l'emporter'.¹⁵⁶ 'Tout homme ... [peut] être aristocrate, c'est-à-dire placer au centre de sa vie ... l'idéal esthétique'.¹⁵⁷ Lacaze-Duthiers influenced the 'action d'art' movement composed of young writers who wished to make beauty a practical force in life. They believed that beauty was 'une dynamique sociale'.¹⁵⁸ 'Ce que nous entendons par « action d'art » ce n'est pas seulement une action dans l'art à propos de telle ou telle œuvres des beaux-arts ou des lettres ; c'est encore et surtout notre attitude dans la vie'.¹⁵⁹ In sum, Lacaze-Duthiers and his followers sought to erase the line between life and art, between anarchy and beauty, between the political and the aesthetic. This end could be achieved by any individual: 'L'Atistocratie consiste, pour chaque individu, à faire de sa vie une œuvre d'art libre et désintéressée, au-dessus de toutes les limitations et de tous

¹⁵⁴ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Action directe, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

¹⁵⁵ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Aristocratie, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

¹⁵⁶ M. Devaldès, Gérard Lacaze-Duthiers et la Bio-esthétique, *Bibliothèque de l'aristocratie*, n. 42, p. 84. Elsewhere, however, he describes the masses in derogatory terms. Cf. p. 97.

¹⁵⁷ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *Aristocratie*, juin 1939, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Qu'est-ce que les visionnaires, *La foire aux chimères*, n. 2, janvier-février 1908.

¹⁵⁹ *L'action d'art*, n. 1, 15 février 1913.

la chair animale, vous vous rendez complices d'innombrables meurtres qui ne vous profitent pas. Vous êtes des victimes qui se laissent nourrir du sang d'autres victimes'.²⁷¹ The individualist propagandist and member of *l'anarchie* Rirette Maîtrejean concluded: '[Les anarchistes individualistes] ne sauraient voir dans leur assiette de la viande abattue. Ils portent gravée au cœur la devise : « Soyez bons pour les animaux »'.²⁷² As made clear by the foregoing, individualist anarchists were concerned with the freedom and wellbeing of non-human animals.

Adopting a plant-based diet was one of the main ways in which individualists sought to live in harmony with nature. The ruthless exploitation of man over nature was sometimes described as yet another form of domination, especially in naturian texts. Though not the principal argument for veganism, ecological concerns were nonetheless present in several individualist writings. Even for someone like Rimbault, for whom adopting a plant-based diet was primarily a question of health, veganism meant respecting and taking care of the more-human-world:²⁷³

Le végétalien, cultivant ses végétaux [...], ne confectionnera sa basconnaise qu'en la prélevant, au jour le jour, feuille par feuille, sur chaque plant, et pour un plant qu'il arrachera, par nécessité indispensable, il en fera pousser plusieurs autres en rétablissant lui-même et de ses œuvres, l'équilibre en la Nature.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ A. Libertad, cited in A. Colomber, *À nous deux, Patrie !* Paris, Éd. de l'Insurgé, 1912, pp. 92–3. Cf. *La Revue anarchiste*, décembre 1922.

²⁷² Maîtrejean 1988 [1913], p. 11.

²⁷³ L. Rimbault, Le problème de la viande, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 9, décembre-janvier 1923.

²⁷⁴ L. Rimbault, *Secrets bienfaits de la maladie, les soins exécutant, médecine et médecins, ce que le visage révèle*, Luynes, Éditions de Terre libérée, 1928, p. 59.

journal *l'Insurgé* in 1926.²⁶⁶ Veganism fostered hope in a new world of free, regenerated, and conscious individuals.

Veganism had broader moral implication for anarchists' self-development. According to a 1924 survey of members of the *Foyer végétalien*, some linked veganism to pacifism and non-violence as well as kindness and solidarity, while others saw in it the most efficient way to lead a simpler, happier, and more natural life.²⁶⁷ As a 24-year-old respondee by the name of Bourguigneau contended: 'Plus l'individu pratiquera le végétalisme, plus il s'approchera de la nature, plus il se développera, plus il vivra sainement, plus il sera heureux et bon pour les autres'.²⁶⁸ Another respondee, Charlotte Davy, stated: 'Tous végétaliens, la vie plus simple, l'humanité moins sanguinaire, plus de bonté ... Mais quel bouleversement dans la mentalité générale. Quelle révolution dans les mœurs!'²⁶⁹ Veganism was a springboard for moral edification.

Although the regeneration of one's health along with the quest for personal emancipation (be it economic, moral, or spiritual) were the primary motives for converting to veganism, individualist anarchists also expressed concern for animal suffering and opposed animal exploitation. Many argued that animal life was valuable in and of itself. Butaud denounced the state of servitude of domesticated animals and spoke in favour of agricultural machines that would suppress animal slavery. Rimbault decried the 'commerce nécrophage' of meat production and the cruelty it involved: the animal slaughtered for human consumption was always 'surmené, harassé, affamé, maltraité, terrorisé'.²⁷⁰ Libertad drew an unequivocal parallel between workers' exploitation and that of animals: 'En mangeant de

²⁶⁶ *L'Insurgé*, n. 52, 1 mai 1926.

²⁶⁷ G. Butaud, *Le Végétalisme*, décembre 1924, p. 24.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁷⁰ L. Rimbault, *Le Problème de la viande*, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 4, avril 1922.

les partis'.¹⁶⁰ Through the figure of the sage, we now look at two early individualists who sought to make their life an anarchist work of art. The style and manner in which they chose to live their life and struggle are concrete manifestations of anarcho-individualism.

2. The Sage

a. Zo d'Axa

L'Endehors, launched in May 1891, was the periodical that best encapsulated and articulated individualist sentiment in the late nineteenth century. Zo d'Axa, its founder, described the vocation of the journal as follows:

Je voulais donner une feuille libre aux écrivains de ce temps, assoiffés comme moi de parler franc, une tribune où l'on pourrait aller jusqu'au bout de sa pensée. Je voulais la première réalisation de ce groupement idéal, sans hiérarchie, sans comparses, dans lequel l'individu, l'artiste, s'épanouirait en sa personnalité toute, jalouse, même de n'être point étiquetée. C'était *L'Endehors*.

The title of the periodical reflected its founder's character: 'Celui que rien n'ennôle et qu'une impulsive nature guide seule, ce passionné sans complexe, ce hors-la-loi, ce hors d'école, cet isolé chercheur d'au-delà, ne se dessine-t-il pas dans ce mot : *L'Endehors* ?'.¹⁶¹ Zo d'Axa – 'Ce mousquetaire de l'anarchie', 'cet anarchiste hors de l'anarchie', 'cet extraordinaire réfractaire', as Georges Clemenceau, Adolphe Retté, and Victor Méric called him – did not profess any creed; he did not belong to any

¹⁶⁰ G. de Lacaze Duthiers, *Aristocratie, Revue Mensuelle d'Art et de Littérature*.

¹⁶¹ Zo d'Axa, *Vous n'êtes que des poires*, Le Pré Saint-Gervais, le passager clandestin, 2010 [1900], p. 19.

party or literary tradition, but vehemently asserted his will to live as a perpetual outsider.¹⁶²

Zo d'Axa was the first to sketch out an individualist account of personal revolt. His life and writings may be seen as constituting a turning point in individualist anarchism insofar as he moved beyond the purely aesthetic individualism of his day in favour of an individualism that focused upon selfemancipation as an essential component of revolutionary change. Thus, although he remained an isolated individual rather than a leading figure of the tradition, one could view him – as Manfredonia claims – as the founding father of a more existential individualist anarchism.¹⁶³ He is certainly amongst the most compelling and complex individualist figures of literary individualist anarchism in fin-de-siècle France.

Whilst aesthetic individualism remained by and large an intellectual and artistic ideal, Zo d'Axa advocated concrete change in the here and now. He did not subscribe to the mere stylization of existence promoted by the dandies of his day. For example, in Huymans's *À Rebours* or Barrès's *Le Culte du Moi*, the dandy ends up being the egotistic spectator of his own life. He wallows in his privilege social position, blissfully indifferent to the rest of society. Conversely, instead of the idealized, isolated, and hence ultimately artificial self of the dandy, Zo d'Axa promoted a much more down-to-earth self that is aware of their social position and the all-pervasive oppression of the archist order.¹⁶⁴

In Zo d'Axa's view, the individual should act in the present and strive to emancipate themselves. This will to life begins with individual revolt combined with the pursuit of immediate and direct pleasure and satisfaction.

¹⁶² G. Clemenceau, A. Retté, V. Méric, *Autour de Zo d'Axa*, Centre national et musée Jean Jaurès, Summer 1996.

¹⁶³ Manfredonia 1984, p. 175.

¹⁶⁴ Zo d'Axa, *De Mazas à Jérusalem*, Paris, L'Endehors, 1974 [1895], p. 136.

in it a spiritual conduit. This can be illustrated by the quasi-monastic atmosphere at the *Foyer végétalien* in Paris. The *Foyer végétalien* organized various activities such as gymnastics and literature classes, weekly talks and debates, as well as feasts. It had six beds for the homeless and comrades in need. It also included a restaurant that served daily vegan meals at a low cost. On its walls one could read oddly juxtaposed naturist and anarchist precepts such as 'Ne buvez pas de vin, ne fumez pas et ... apprenez l'espéranto'.²⁶¹ There was an overtly religious overtone to these vegan gatherings, such that some commented upon the ritualistic feel of communal meals.²⁶² Butaud noted that 'les religieux ont bien compris que manger ensemble rapproche les hommes'.²⁶³ Elsewhere, he wrote that veganism brought about redemption: 'L'Église vous offre la Grâce par votre don à Dieu. Le végétalisme, le naturisme vous apporte la sérénité, le pardon à vos crimes si vous le propagez'.²⁶⁴ He even described the core individualist belief in self-transformation, which he viewed as uniting all vegans, in religious terms:

La question sociale n'est plus une affaire de force, c'est une question de transformation individuelle, et tous les végétaliens, quel que soit leurs conditions de vie, leurs antécédents sociaux, même leur éthique particulière, sont liés par un apostolat commun.²⁶⁵

For individualists like Butaud, veganism was partly grounded in spirituality. 'Le véritable végétalien est un mystique' wrote an anonymous contributor to the individualist

²⁶¹ E. Gascoin, *Les Religions inconnues*, Paris, Gallimard, 1928, p. 183.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ G. Butaud, Banquet des amis du Foyer, *Le Végétalien*, décembre 1924.

²⁶⁴ G. Butaud, Le Bénéfice de la propagande, *Le Végétalien*, février 1925.

²⁶⁵ G. Butaud, *Le Végétalien*, décembre 1924.

une partie de la doctrine de libre examen qui transformera le monde'.²⁵⁶ First, veganism enabled one to gain economic freedom. Individualists believed that we enslaved ourselves with artificial needs. Animal source foods and animal products were instances of such unnecessary goods that kept one dependent upon the capitalist system and the ultra-consumerist mindset it fosters. During a conference, one speaker gave the recipe for what was supposed to be a wholesome meal made up of corn, oatmeal, cacao, and calcium phosphate, which only cost 25 cents.²⁵⁷ Individualists such as Butaud, Zaïkowska, and Rimbault were convinced that veganism was the key to monetary independence, autonomy, and self-sufficiency. Second, veganism was a way to practice anarchy in the here and now: '[les végétaliens] sont des anarchistes en action, qui ne coopèrent en rien que ce soit, par notre méthode de vie, aux forces sur lesquelles repose le principe d'État ou de simple autorité'.²⁵⁸ It was yet another way to fight against the social order:

Le végétalisme n'est pas qu'une question d'hygiène alimentaire pour constipés comme le végétarisme, c'est une pratique de non-coopération formelle et absolue contre toutes les forces sur lesquelles repose l'État et ses satellites : Eglise, Argent, Salarial, Armée, Justice.²⁵⁹

In addition to health, veganism was a means of self-sufficiency and of revolt against society.

Vegetarianism has historically been closely linked to various esoteric sects.²⁶⁰ Some anarchists also seem to have found

²⁵⁶ G. Butaud, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 8, novembre 1922.

²⁵⁷ Archives de la Préfecture de police de Paris, BA 1499, 30 avril 1912.

²⁵⁸ L. Rimbault, Lettre à E. Armand, 18 août 1926, IFHS, Fond Armand, 14 AS 211.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ C. Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast*, Hanover, University Press of New England, 1993.

Veux-tu donc vivre ? Es-tu prêt ? Alors n'attends plus personne, marche à ta haine, à tes joies – aux joies des franchises totales, des risques et de la fierté.¹⁶⁵

L'idée de révolte, ainsi, n'est pas une quelconque manie, une foi nouvelle destinée à tromper encore tes appétits et tes espoirs. C'est individuelle énergie de se défendre contre la masse. C'est l'altière volonté de vivre. C'est l'art de marcher tout seul.¹⁶⁶

By inciting the individual to transform themselves and their life, Zo d'Axa saw himself as paving the way for the advent of an anarchist society. He was not the blasé aesthete that looks condescendingly upon the common people, but a vector and catalyst of social change.

Nous préparons l'expérience d'une société libertaire. Incertains de ce qu'elle donnera, nous souhaitons quand même cette tentative, ce changement.¹⁶⁷

Nous voulons – et par tous les moyens possibles – irrespectueux par nature des lois et des préjugés, nous voulons – immédiatement – conquérir tout ce que la vie porte en elle de fruits et de fleurs. Si plus tard une révolution résulte des efforts épars, tant mieux ! Ce sera la bonne. Impatients, nous l'aurons devancée.¹⁶⁸

Far from being doctrinal, Zo d'Axa's individualism was something to be experienced; it was spontaneous and instinctive. Indeed, it was first and foremost a way of life:

¹⁶⁵ Zo d'Axa 2010 [1900], p. 28. Cf. p. 47.

¹⁶⁶ Zo d'Axa, À toute occasion, *La Feuille*, n. 1, 6 octobre 1897.

¹⁶⁷ Zo d'Axa, *De Mazas à Jérusalem*, Paris, L'Endehors, 1974 [1895], p. 136.

¹⁶⁸ Zo d'Axa, À toute occasion, *La Feuille*, n. 1, 6 octobre 1897.

La Volonté de Vivre

Et vivre hors les lois asservissantes, hors les règles étroite, hors même les théories idéalement formulées pour les âges à venir.

Vivre sans croire au paradis divin et sans trop espérer le paradis terrestre.

Vivre pour leur présente, hors le mirage des sociétés futures ; vivre et palper cette existence dans le plaisir hautain de la bataille sociale.

C'est plus qu'un état d'esprit : c'est une manière d'être, et tout de suite.¹⁶⁹

Ultimately, Zo d'Axa did not believe in large-scale social change: 'Vive la liberté provisoire ! Le mot n'effraie pas ; nous savons bien l'aléa de notre pauvre liberté – provisoire toujours. Le délit est de vouloir être soi-même et de tenter l'affranchissement'.¹⁷⁰ The struggle for emancipation is valuable in and of itself. La rébellion pour la beauté du geste; 'la lutte pour le plaisir de la lutte et de l'irrespect'.¹⁷¹

Nous nous battons pour la joie des batailles et sans rêve d'avenir meilleur. Que nous importent les lendemains qui seront dans des siècles ! ... Il faut vivre dès aujourd'hui, dès tout de suite, et c'est en dehors de toutes les lois, de toutes les règles, de toutes les théories – même anarchistes – que nous voulons nous laisser aller toujours à nos piétés, à nos emportements, à nos douceurs, à nos rages, à nos instincts, avec l'orgueil d'être nous-mêmes.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Zo d'Axa, *De Mazas à Jérusalem*, Paris, Mutines Séditions, 2005 [1895], p. 161.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 40.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 47.

¹⁷² Zo d'Axa 2010 [1900], p. 21.

maladies'.²⁵³ Veganism was thus regarded as the diet of regeneration.

It is important to point out that vegetarianism and veganism were not always limited to abstinence from meat and fish or from all animal products (as in present-day usages of the term). When it did not imply the exclusive consumption of fruit and vegetables, vegetarianism was linked to a broader hygienist and naturist lifestyle that also excluded processed foods and intoxicants, notably alcohol, tobacco, and sugar.²⁵⁴ These were regarded as addictive and debilitating substances that kept workers in a state of weakness and servitude. Conversely, vegetarianism was viewed as the diet that would help people recover their physical and mental abilities. As Jules Méline wrote in the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*:

[Le végéarisme est] un système d'alimentation excluant tout ce qui est de nature à compromettre l'équilibre physiologico-mental et, par voie de conséquence, la vigueur de l'homme. Ainsi la viande, les poisons, les spiritueux, les boissons fermentées ..., le chocolat, le café, etc., etc.²⁵⁵

Thus, in addition to health promotion, the vegan diet was adopted as therapy and disease prevention. For many individualist anarchists, veganism was no less than the quest for the ideal – or the most natural – human diet.

Veganism, for individualist anarchists, was not merely a question of diet or healthy lifestyle. It contributed to one's personal and social emancipation in other important ways. As Butaud wrote: 'il ne faut pas que l'on continue à envisager le végétalisme comme un système thérapeutique, le végétalisme est

²⁵³ *La Revue Naturiste*, septembre 1922.

²⁵⁴ For Zaïkowska, for instance, vegans abstained from eating sugar and drank nothing but water. S. Zaïkowska, *Végétalisme*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁵⁵ J. Méline, *Végéarisme*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

ism as a holistic natural lifestyle.²⁴⁸ The individualist way of life had become the way of nature.

The restoration and preservation of health in the face of the physical and moral degeneration produced by industrial civilization was the utmost consideration for most vegan anarchists. Indeed, many were those who justified veganism solely on naturist and hygienist medical terms. For hygienists, a healthy body is one that is able to withstand disease.²⁴⁹ Diet was seen as the principal means of strengthening the immune system (others included the proper use of water, air, sunlight, rest, and physical exercise). Some also claimed that plant-based diets had curative virtues. This was the case of Rimbault who built a preventorium and a health centre for the sick at *Terre Libérée*, where he invented what he believed was an optimally nutritious meal, *La Basconnaise*, a seasonal vegan salad composed of some 34 ingredients, and which could be adapted to the individual's personal dietary needs.²⁵⁰ Zaïkowska, who eventually made the *Basconnaise* the basis of her diet, wrote that it was her health problems that first led her transition from vegetarianism to veganism.²⁵¹ The Breton anarchosyndicalist Charles Fouyer asserted that his articular rheumatisms had completely disappeared after spending only six months on a vegan diet in Bascon.²⁵² Similarly, we are told that eight years after the colony had embraced veganism, no-one had fallen badly ill: 'à part de petites incommodités de santé très passagères, [les colons] n'ont pas eu de vraies

²⁴⁸ For further discussion on Rimbault, see A. Baubérot, *Aux sources de l'écologie anarchiste : Louis Rimbault et les communautés végétaliennes en France dans la première moitié du XXe siècle*, *Le Mouvement social*, vol. 1, n. 246, 2014.

²⁴⁹ A. Baubérot, *Naturisme et hygiénisme, Histoire du naturisme. Le mythe du retour à la nature*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

²⁵⁰ S. Zaïkowska, *Végétalisme, Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁵¹ S. Zaïkowska, *La vie et la mort de Georges Butaud, Le Végétalien*, 1929; S. Zaïkowska, *Recettes végétaliennes, Le Végétalien*, 1929.

²⁵² C. Fouyer, *Le Végétalien*, décembre 1927.

Although Zo d'Axa did not provide a particularly refined theoretical account of individualist anarchism, his merit was primarily to move from a passive to an active individualism. What he advocated and embodied was primarily an attitude of constant revolt and a will to live life as one saw fit in the present. He was amongst the first to view the struggle for the emancipation of the individual as being an inherent part of the struggle for the emancipation of society. Although his thought did not have major impact upon the anarchist movement as a whole, Zo d'Axa nonetheless pioneered a specifically individualist way of life on the fringes of anarchism. He is perhaps best remembered for the title of his periodical, which was adopted as an epithet by future individualists:

'*Endehors – il suffit d'oser !*'.¹⁷³

b. Libertad

Co-founder of *l'anarchie*, the seminal individualist journal of the early twentieth century, Libertad is one of the most significant figures of the second generation of individualists. He defined individualism as :

Cette philosophie, cette science, dirais-je, qui fait remonter tout à l'individu, lui donnant enfin sa place, nous voulons la mettre en pratique ... lasse de s'attaquer à des entités – État, société, bourgeoisie –, elle s'attaque aux individus, essayant de les transformer, de les révolutionner.¹⁷⁴

Libertad made a crucial distinction between institutionalized and subjective forms of authority. He laid special emphasis on fighting against authoritarianism within oneself:

¹⁷³ Zo d'Axa, *À toute occasion, La Feuille*, n. 1, 6 octobre 1897.

¹⁷⁴ Libertad, *À nos amis qui s'arrêtent, l'anarchie*, 1–8 août 1903; Libertad 2006, pp. 126–7.

L'anarchiste actuel sent que, si l'autorité a une forme objective dont l'armée, la police, les prisons sont des réalités matérielles ..., elle prend surtout sa force dans les idées subjectives qu'on ne peut arracher qu'une à une des cerveaux. L'anarchiste sent que s'il ne peut se dérober à la forme extérieure de l'autorité il lui est aussi difficile, sinon plus, de se dérober à sa forme intérieure, jetée en lui par l'atavisme des siècles ... Pour nous l'anarchiste est celui qui a vaincu en lui les formes subjectives de l'autorité.¹⁷⁵

Taking non-conformity and personal revolt to the next level Libertad, perhaps more than any anarchist before him, marked the turning point from an anarchism of the mind to one of action:

En attendant que la société change, jusqu'alors, l'anarchiste vivait comme tout le monde, de façon assez conformiste. Insurgé dans sa pensée, il pouvait se trouver fort soumis dans ses actes : être bon ouvrier, bon citoyen, légaliste et régulier, anticlérical et fabricant de chapelets. Avec Libertad, le point de vue avait changé, l'anarchiste devait dès aujourd'hui mettre ses actes en accord avec ses idées.¹⁷⁶

Il a fait de l'anarchisme une philosophie plus vivante, plus réaliste, il a réagi violemment contre le révolutionnaire en chambre ... il voulait qu'on modifiât son existence. N'était pas vraiment *conscient* quiconque ne conformait pas ses gestes aux doctrines.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 128–9.

¹⁷⁶ Mauricius, mémoires, P-V. Berthier (ed.), 1974. Cited in Steiner 2019, p. 14.

¹⁷⁷ Lorulot 1916, p. 12.

bers of the Bascon colony, where he lived for a couple of years with his wife Clémence alongside Butaud and Zaikowska. In the early 1910s – probably the time during which he became vegan – he established a *milieu libre* in Pavillons-sous-Bois (Seine-et-Oise) with a dozen comrades, including his brother, Marceau Rimbault, a contributor to *l'anarchie*, and Octave Garnier, future member of the Bonnot Gang. From 1922 his vegan campaigning intensified: he wrote several articles for the *Néo-Naturien*, gave talks at the *Foyer végétalien* in Paris, and went on a tour giving conferences on veganism all over France with the Breton naturian Hervé Coatmeur. His veganism became gradually more intransigent: he called meat eaters ‘cimetières ambulants’ and their diet ‘alimentation sanglante’.²⁴⁶ In 1924 Rimbault established another *milieu libre* – a ‘vegan city’ called *Terre Libérée*, in Luynes (Indre-et-Loire), which was intended to be the continuation of the vegetarian experimentation of the Bascon colony. This exclusively and strictly vegan colony had explicit pedagogical goals: it was meant to be ‘une école de pratique végétalienne’ ‘à l’effet de démontrer que le végétalien peut se suffire à lui-même’. It was geared towards individuals who already followed a plant-based diet and who wanted to keep exploring and studying its health benefits.²⁴⁷ Rimbault coined the term *naturarchie* to illustrate his vision of vegan-

seven entries in Faure’s *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, namely Maladie; Malchance; Maternites; Medicin, Médecine, Médicastre; Mort.

²⁴⁶ A. Levebvre, Le Milieu libre de Bascon, texte dactylographié de la conférence faite à la Société historique de ChâteauThierry, septembre 1963. L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 15, décembre 1923-janvier 1924.

²⁴⁷ L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 16, février 1924. Although there was supposed to be twenty permanent residents at the colony, there were only five for most of its existence, namely Louis Rimbault, his wife Clémence Rimbault, their adopted daughter Léonie Pierre, as well as Gabrielle Lallemand and her daughter Solange. Visitors were numerous (300 during the first 10 months following the foundation of the colony).

Sophie Zaïkowska and her partner Georges Butaud, central figures of neo-naturianism, were amongst the keenest individualist advocates of vegan and raw food diets.²⁴¹ They were also the main instigators of libertarian colonies in France. In 1911 Butaud and Zaïkowska established the *Milieu libre de Bascon* (Aisne), which became exclusively vegan from 1914.²⁴² It was the longest-lasting *milieu libre* in early-twentieth-century France: it remained a libertarian colony until 1931 then became a vegetarian and naturist holiday centre until 1951. From 1918 onwards Zaïkowska and Butaud gave fortnightly talks on veganism in Paris. In 1919 they founded the *Société Végétalienne Communiste*, whose manifesto described veganism as: ‘une base nécessaire du développement individuel et social’.²⁴³ In 1922 Butaud instituted the *Foyer végétalien*, first in Nice then in Paris, which acted as the model for other vegan community centres around France.²⁴⁴ In 1924 the couple launched the journal *Le Végétalien* to continue their vigorous vegan propaganda.

Louis Rimbault²⁴⁵ was another significant individualist anarchist promoter of veganism. He was one of the first mem-

²⁴¹ G. Butaud, *Le Végétalisme*, Ermont, Publication du Végétalien, 1930.

²⁴² *La Revue naturiste*, septembre 1922.

²⁴³ G. Butaud, Société végétalienne communiste, *Pendant la mêlée*, 1–15 décembre 1919.

²⁴⁴ S. Zaïkowska, Végétalisme, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

²⁴⁵ Louis Rimbault was born in Tours in 1877 in a poor family. His father was an alcoholic. He worked as a locksmith and as a mechanic. His brother Marceau was a collaborator to *l’anarchie*. Rimbault began frequenting the illegalist and individualist milieus in the 1910s. He spent two years in jail after having been associated with the *Bandits tragiques* in 1911. He became vegan around the same time – a diet he actively promoted for the rest of his life. He lived at the Bascon colony between 1910 and 1912 with his partner Clemence, George Butaud, and Sophie Zaïkowska before founding his own colony in Pavillons-sous-Bois with his brother and Octave Garnier. In 1922 his vegan propaganda intensified: he became an active collaborator to the *Néo-Naturien* and gave talks at the *Foyer végétalien* in Paris. In 1924 he established a strictly vegan colony, *Terre Libérée*, in Lynes near Tours. His wife Clémence died two years later from tuberculosis. An accident that occurred at *Terre Libérée* in 1932 left him paraplegic until his death in 1949. He wrote

With Libertad, individualism moved beyond *en-dehors* self-emancipation of the kind promoted by someone like Zo d’Axa and took on a more social dimension. As a skilful orator, Libertad publicly denounced behaviour he deemed morally reprehensible and actively enticed people to join the individualist cause:

Soyez vous-mêmes ! Émancipez-vous de la tutelle de ceux qui vous bernent et qui prétendent, cependant, travailler à votre libération ... Le véritable ennemi est en vous, préjugés, résignations, craintes, supprimez tout ce qui fait de vous des esclaves ... devenez des êtres fiers et libres.¹⁷⁸

His charisma and zeal were such that André Colomer described him as a guru-like figure. He recounted how he walked into bars and restaurants to find new followers:

Libertad allait dans les bars et dans les restaurants où le peuple mange et boit. Il s’y arrêta debout parmi les tables maculées de graisse et de vin et il disait aux ouvriers : « Esclaves qui bercez votre

douleur sale du mot de liberté ... apprenez à être libres quotidiennement ».

... au-dessus du moutonnement fécal de la Bêtise, parfois, une jeune tête se dressait avec l’incertaine clarté un peu hagarde des yeux qui voient soudain grand jour après tant de nuits... Et Libertad lui disait : “Viens, camarade, laisse ces brutes, viens avec nous vivre ta vie hors du troupeau”. Et d’un élan

¹⁷⁸ A. Libertad, cited in Lorulot 1916, p. 4.

de toute l'âme, un compagnon nouveau, héroïquement se détachait de l'armée des esclaves pour se joindre à la petite bande des réfractaires.¹⁷⁹

Libertad was also an irreverent and defiant jester. He saw mockery and derision as effective tools to denounce social injustices: 'Danser et faire les fous, c'est une excellente propagande'.¹⁸⁰ In his biography of Libertad, Lorulot described him as 'l'éternel trouble-fête, le critique impitoyable, l'empêcheur de palabrer en paix ... il est volontiers provocateur, moqueur, vis-à-vis des agents de police'.¹⁸¹ Some of his actions were clearly intended to shock (*épater*) the bourgeoisie. For example, upon his arrival in Paris, Libertad, age 21, interrupted a priest's homily during mass at the Sacré-Coeur shouting "je demande la parole; je demande la parole" and began shamelessly addressing the bemused congregation.¹⁸² During a carnival, Libertad was dressed as a wolf and followed by a group of people dressed as sheep holding a placard that read 'Group des électeurs'.¹⁸³ Libertad was a kind of clown activist *avant la lettre*.

Like Zo d'Axa, Libertad believed in the intrinsic value of rebellion: 'J'aime la lutte pour elle-même ... Qu'importent les déceptions de demain ... Vivons avec noblesse, fortement, impétueusement, affirmons-nous, sacrifions-nous, non à un dogme désuet ou tyrannique, mais à un « moi » idéal et puissant'.¹⁸⁴ He also embraced some kind of hedonism: 'Soyons

¹⁷⁹ A. Colomer, Le roman des « bandits tragiques », *La Revue anarchiste*, décembre 1922.

¹⁸⁰ Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris, BA 928, rapport du 18 février 1908. Cited in Steiner, *Les En-dehors*, p. 38.

¹⁸¹ Lorulot 1916, pp. 2–3.

¹⁸² À Notre-Dame de la Galette, *Le Père peinarde*, septembre 1897. See also Maîtrejean 1888 [1913], p. 20.

¹⁸³ Lorulot 1916, p. 11.

¹⁸⁴ A. Libertad, cited in A. Lorulot, *Albert Libertad*, Saint-Étienne, Publications de l'Idée libre, c. 1916, p. 15.

Explicit anarchist advocacy of vegetarianism began at the dawn of the twentieth century. In 1901 two articles from the prominent anarchist newspaper *Le Libertaire* argued in favour of vegetarianism and Reclus wrote a famous piece on the subject for *La Réforme alimentaire*, the organ of the French Vegetarian Society.²³⁷ In the same year, the feminist writer and activist Léonie Fournival (aka Rolande), who had adopted a plant-based diet during her two-year stay with English anarchists in London, joined the naturians and founded the group *Les végétariens de Paris*. Libertad, Paraf-Javal, and friends of *l'anarchie* began promoting plant-based diets from 1905, but it is from the 1910s that vegetarianism and veganism began to truly flourish in libertarian circles. Several individualist journals published articles on the subject.²³⁸ Notably, naturist and hygienist doctors provided scientific arguments in favour of vegetarianism in Lorulot's *L'Idée libre*.²³⁹ Vegetarianism was also a commonly debated topic during anarchist gatherings and conferences. A note from a meeting of the anarchist group of the 15th *arrondissement* from the winter of 1914 reports that its participants discussed the many benefits of vegetarianism:

Les anarchistes présents se sont bornés à parler entre eux des questions relatives à l'alimentation végétarienne. Ils sont unanimes à constater les avantages de ce régime en ce qui concerne la santé, le développement de l'intelligence et de la force de volonté.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ E. Reclus, À propos du végétarisme, *La Réforme alimentaire*, vol. 5, n. 3, mars 1901; Adrien, Le végétarisme et la question sociale, *Le Libertaire*, 24–31 août 1901; Végétus, Un mot sur le végétarisme, *Le Libertaire* n. 84, 29 septembre–5 octobre 1901.

²³⁸ E.g. P. Nada, Végétarisme, *La Vie anarchiste*, janvier 1912.

²³⁹ E.g. Dr Guelpa, Désintoxication organique et régime végétarien, *L'Idée libre*, 1 juillet 1912.

²⁴⁰ Anonymous note, 6 January 1914, Ba 1506.

Zisly, were sometimes critical of vegetarianism. Nature, they argued, has made humans omnivores. Beylie believed that humans were meant to be predators and that animals would proliferate exceedingly if they were not killed by humans. He thought that plant-based diets were fitting for the summer, whereas meat was to be consumed in the winter.²³⁴ Zisly distinguished natural foods (vegetables, honey, milk, meat, etc.) from civilized ones (all processed foods, sugar, alcohol, etc.) and claimed that meat gave humans greater strength.²³⁵ In his view, animals and plants were both part of nature and suffered in their own way when killed for food. Although he believed that it would be best if humans and other animals lived in peace, he claimed that vegetarians were 'les fanatiques de la nature'.²³⁶ Zisly became more sympathetic towards vegetarianism as years passed and became a member of the *Société végétarienne de France* in 1905.

It is the second generation of naturians – the neo-naturians – that embraced vegetarianism (as well as veganism (*végétalisme*) and raw veganism (*crudivégétalisme*)). Neo-naturianism emerged before the First World War, but really took root in the 1920s with Henry Le Fèvre's journal *Néo-naturien* (1921-1927). Less radical than their predecessors, neo-naturians yearned for a simpler existence, free from superficial and superfluous needs and possessions. They sought to lead a more rustic lives, finding more natural alternatives to housing, transport, relationships, and so on. Close to the naturist movement, they promoted outdoor activities, physical exercise, simple clothing, and nudism. Veganism was at the heart of the neo-naturians' quest for natural lifestyles.

²³⁴ H. Zisly, *Mouvement naturien et néo-naturien*, *La Vie naturelle*, n. 5, 1911.

²³⁵ H. Zisly, *L'Ordre naturel*, novembre 1905; Réflexion sur le végétarisme, *Le Libertaire*, n. 25, 1903.

²³⁶ H. Zisly, *Nature et civilisation*, *L'Ordre naturel*, novembre 1905.

désireux de connaître toutes les jouissances, tous les bonheurs, toutes les sensations. Ne soyons résignés à aucune diminution de notre « moi »'.¹⁸⁵ Libertad practiced non-monogamy. He was in a relationship with Anna and Amandine Mahé, who were sisters. He had a child with Anna, nicknamed Minuscule or Minus until he was old enough to choose his own name.

Though primarily remembered for his provocative speeches and hot-tempered personality, which, despite walking on crutches, made him get into brawls with pretty much anyone who got in his way, Libertad also wrote numerous articles for *l'anarchie*, co-started the popular education movement of the *causeries populaires*, and was one of the founders of the *Ligue antimilitariste*. He is often cited as an archetypal individualist who was equally committed to fighting against all forms of authority and to living with great intensity:

Le désir de l'anarchie est de pouvoir exercer ses facultés avec le plus d'intensité possible. Plus il s'instruit, plus il prend d'expérience, plus il renverse d'obstacles, tant intellectuels, moraux que matériels, plus il prend un champ large, plus il permet d'extension à son individualité, plus il devient libre d'évoluer et plus il s'achemine vers la réalisation de son désir.¹⁸⁶ Pour aller vers la liberté, il nous faut développer notre individualité. Quand je dis aller vers la liberté, je veux dire aller vers le plus complet développement de notre individu.¹⁸⁷

In summation, one end of the spectrum of the egoist type loosely corresponds to the stereotypical image of the individualist as egotistic and prone to bourgeois, if not aristocratic,

¹⁸⁵ A. Libertad, *l'anarchie*, 25 avril 1907.

¹⁸⁶ Libertad, *l'anarchie*, 26 décembre 1907.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

elitism. Yet this form of egoist literary individualism was as short-lived as were terrorist manifestations of propaganda by the deed. Most fin-desiècle artists had but a wavering preoccupation with the anarchist cause. There were longer-lasting forms of aesthetic individualism, such as de Lazade-Duthiers's artistocracy, which were not meant to be reserved to a privileged and enlightened few. Blurring the line between the aesthetic and the existential, they laid special emphasis on the transformative power of the creative process applied to all spheres of ordinary life. We find examples of artistocrats in the aesthetics of existence of leading individualists from vastly different socioeconomic backgrounds and life stories such as Zo d'Axa and Libertad. Drawing inspiration and strength from their words and deeds, some individualists set out to create associations, communities, and islands of freedom wherein anarchy could become a holistic way of life.

iii. Constructivist

The constructivist is the least known and least studied individualist anarchist type, yet their influence is the most enduring. Although constructivists were some of the most significant individualist actors of the Belle Époque, their connexion to the broader anarchist movement is often overlooked, if not altogether forgotten. Far from being naïve utopians and apolitical eccentrics constructivists brought about mezzo-level prefigurative social change that in many ways anticipated the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, thereby debunking the idea of the individualist as an exclusively self-centred and solitary person. The constructivist offers a new angle from which to consider individualism as well as anarchism as a whole.

The constructivist is wary of the idea that a cataclysmic revolution caused by spontaneous mass insurrection can give rise to personal or collective liberation. They believe that it is

Anarchist defences of the animal cause in France emerged with the birth of the movement in the second half of the nineteenth century.²²⁹ Many of them were put forth by women such as the journalist Caroline Rémy (aka Séverine),²³⁰ the poet and activist Marie Huot, and the celebrated communard Louise Michel. The prominent anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus is one of the classical anarchists who reflected deeply upon the animal question. He became a strict vegetarian in 1893, age 63. According to Reclus, there are significant similarities between the process of human socialization and that of animal domestication.²³¹ *Mutatis mutandis*, in both cases submission to authority is partly a matter of voluntary servitude. The devotee praying to their god is akin to the pet begging their master for a treat.²³² Reclus saw animals as having some degree of moral agency. As such, it is partly incumbent upon them to rebel and emancipate themselves from human dominion. That said, Reclus did not believe that domestication was necessarily bad. He distinguished exploitative relationships between human and other animals from mutually beneficial ones. As with human associations, the latter can be based on cooperation, mutual aid, and camaraderie (even though they initially involved some degree of coercion). Ultimately, for Reclus, human and other animals can work together as allies and learn from each other as companions.²³³

First-wave naturians were not vegetarians. In fact, some figureheads of the movement, notably Henri Beylie and Henri

²²⁹ The geographer Philippe Pelletier is the main French scholar who has looked at the connection between animal liberation and anarchism. He edited two anthologies on the subject. See P. Pelletier (ed.), *Anarchie et cause animale*, vol. 1 & 2, Paris, Les éditions du Monde Libertaire, 2015–2016.

²³⁰ Séverine directed the journal from 1885 to 1888, making her the female publication manager major daily newspaper in France. See P. Couthureau, *Séverine, l'insurgée*, Monaco, Édition du Rocher, 2001.

²³¹ E. Reclus, *L'Homme et la Terre*, vol. I, Paris, Librairie universelle, 1905.

²³² E. Reclus, La Grande famille, *Le Magazine international*, janvier 1897.

²³³ *Ibid.*

skirts of Paris so that comrades who worked in the city could easily visit. Most colonists adopted a hygienist lifestyle, which consisted primarily in abstaining from the “three poisons”.²²⁴ Abstinence was not mandatory, but strongly encouraged, to the extent that some complained that it felt like a monastic rule was being imposed upon them.²²⁵

Naturism was more than the will to lead a healthy lifestyle, it had an important symbolic value. Even when awaiting their death sentence the *bandis tragiques* held fast to a strict *ascesis*: they kept on training their bodies and refraining from all intoxicants.²²⁶ This shows that such practices were valuable in and of themselves, not merely for some kind of future emancipation. In addition, it suggests that they had taken on a ritualistic dimension of their own. They were a way for individualists to preserve their dignity and to remind themselves that they were members of a select group of conscious individuals.²²⁷ Naturist practices may therefore be regarded both as means of consolidating the individualist identity and as a form of spiritual exercise. Moreover, they probably gave comrades a sense of working towards a cause that was greater than themselves as individuals, thereby allowing them to simultaneously assert their marginality and to transcend their individuality. In sum, in addition to being an essential element of the process of self-regeneration, naturism was part and parcel of the good life, as well as a way to symbolically identify with an individualist elite that prefigured anarchy.²²⁸ Abstinence from animal foods was at the core of most naturist practices.

Vegetarianism

²²⁴ C. Dequeker, *La Vie anarchiste*, 1 janvier 1914.

²²⁵ H. Zisly, *La Vie anarchiste*, 20 juin 1913.

²²⁶ Michon 1913, p. 187.

²²⁷ A. Baubérot, *Anarchistes individualistes et réforme des modes de vie, Histoire du naturisme*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

²²⁸ Cf. C. Dequeker, *La Vie anarchiste*, 1 janvier 1914.

more likely to bring about anarchy in the vulgar sense of chaos rather than peaceful harmony. They see faith in revolution as a mystical belief that requires one to make present sacrifices for an idealized future communist society. As Libertad put it: ‘there is no paradise to come, there is no future, there is only the present. Let us live!’¹⁸⁸ For the constructivist, all eschatological visions of social change should be rejected; the *Grand Soir* is no more than a dangerous literary fantasy.¹⁸⁹

No popular uprisings will ever induce profound changes in social and individual mentality. The constructivist advocates forms of revolt that brings about change at the level of the individual or the community in ordinary, daily, and concrete life. Constructivist revolt is not limited to the psyche; it requires regaining control over one’s bodily needs and desires. Challenging conventional ideas on health, hygiene, diet, exercise, and sexuality, the constructivist re-evaluates and re-conditions the ways in which one views and treats one’s psychosomatic self.

The constructivist has a more nuanced view of social change than the insurrectionist – who wants to destroy to rebuild – and the egoist – who is primarily concerned with their own intellectual, moral, and artistic self-development. Although personal transformation remains their central aim, they pay greater heed to the influence of the community and of the environment on the individual. As a result, they seek to simultaneously transform themselves and the world around them: ‘il faut changer l’individu pour modifier le milieu et s’attaquer en même temps au milieu pour transformer l’individu, l’un réagissant sur l’autre.’¹⁹⁰ To this end, they create islands of freedom such as libertarian colonies in which conscious individuals can come together to put into practice anarchist principles and to experiment with alternative ways

¹⁸⁸ Libertad, *Aux résignés, l’anarchie*, 13 avril 1905.

¹⁸⁹ E. Armand, *Société future, Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

¹⁹⁰ C. Malato, cited in E. Armand, *L’Ère nouvelle*, n. 31, juillet-août 1904.

of life. The constructivist believes in the virtuous interplay of environmental, communal, and personal change. With the constructivist, individualism moves beyond the individual.

There are two main constructivist arguments for communal living. First, positive anarchy requires a safer space and comrades with whom to collaborate. In archic society, anarchy is bound to chiefly remain a negative enterprise, for it entails constant opposition to the normalizing pressures of the social milieu. Living amongst a group of like-minded libertarians in a freer environment allows one to set out on more constructive endeavours. Second, personal change for the individual who stands alone against and outside of society is of limited value. What is more, there are certain aspects of the self that can only be changed in relation to others. Living and interacting with other people is the final test of one's self-transformation.

According to the constructivist, domination is ultimately the result of voluntary servitude, that is, the passive acceptance of and implicit submission to the authoritarian order. They seek to help individuals become aware of their state of servitude so that they may realize that change is possible and attainable. Their wish is that more and more people will come to see that it is incumbent upon them to work towards socio-political transformation by refusing to comply with systems of oppression. In semi-democratic societies, mass non-cooperation and non-compliance with state apparatuses and authoritarian institutions will reveal that power is ultimately in people's hands and will lead to a peaceful revolution. Civil disobedience is the constructivist preferred mode of action.

Instances of civil disobedience include:

le refus de travail à l'atelier, à l'usine ou aux champs pour le compte de détenteurs ou accapareurs d'instruments de production ou d'échange appartenant à tous ; l'union libre simple ou plurielle et sa rupture en dehors de tout texte légal,

One should not underestimate the radical nature of hygienist principles. Most people in France at the time still drank wine daily and did not have running water. Personal hygiene was often limited to a jug and a washbasin. The first French public bathhouses in modern history opened in Bordeaux in 1893, then in Paris in 1899. People wore multiple layers of tight clothing. Women wore corsets, men, detachable collars. Hygienist practices were thus in sharp contrast with common sanitary practices. They fostered alternative and renewed care for and attention to the body.

There were several journals in which naturist and individualist ideas intersected. Libertad and friends of *l'anarchie* were early converts to the hygienist trend in the late 1900s and early 1910s. A series of eight articles entitled "*Hygiène et anarchisme*" were published in 1907.²²¹ We also find several articles promoting hygienism in Lorulot's journal *L'Idée libre* as well as Butaud's *La Vie Anarchiste*.²²²

Coatmeur (aka Hervé), a Breton disciple of Han Ryner, launched the *Sphinx individualiste* in 1913 and opened a *Foyer naturien* in Brest as well as a bookshop that sold naturist books and brochures.²²³ Henri Le Fèvre's periodical *Néo-Naturien* (1921–1925) also sought to bring together individualists and naturists, especially through the contributions of Zaïkowska, Butaud, and the painter Jean Lébédoff.

A naturist colony, the *Milieu libre du quai de la Pie* (Saint-Maur), was founded in April 1913 by about 30 individuals who were friends of Butaud and Zaïkowska, and of the journal *La Vie anarchiste*. Unlike prior experiments such as the *Milieu libre de Vaux*, these colonists no longer sought total isolation and self-sufficiency. Instead, they established the colony on the out-

²²¹ Jelm, *Hygiène et anarchisme*, *l'anarchie*, 24 octobre-12 décembre 1907.

²²² E.g. Dr Cabanès, *Savons-nous respirer ?*, *L'Idée libre*, 1 décembre 1911; A. Laforge, *Civilisation et vie naturelle*, *L'Idée libre*, décembre 1912.

²²³ *Le Sphinx naturien*, 1913–1916.

ans. The core of naturism was diet and abstinence from intoxicants. To these one may add bodily hygiene, physical exercise, nudism, and the return to and protection of nature.²¹² Naturists also wrote on a diversity of other topics related to integral health such as respiration, sleep, mastication, and sexual intercourse.²¹³

For most individualists, naturism was limited to the adoption of a vegetarian or vegan diet,²¹⁴ to the rejection of alcohol, tobacco, and some processed foods; regular physical exercise (especially Swedish gymnastics),²¹⁵ practical rather than fashionable clothing;²¹⁶ nudism; and hygiene (including sexual hygiene).²¹⁷ Tobacco, alcohol, and meat were regarded as addictive intoxicants. They were the three great poisons that kept workers in a state of weakness and hence servitude. As Libertad stated: ‘Ne buvez pas de l’alcool, ne fumez pas le tabac. Tuez en vous ces gestes héréditaires qui ont créé en vous, malgré vous, un besoin contre vous’.²¹⁸ The individualist Mauricius exercised at least three times a week: he practiced savate, Greco-Roman wrestling, lifted weights and often he went swimming and cycling.²¹⁹ The *Bandits tragiques* of 1911 and 1912 were committed naturists: they were straight-edge vegans and practiced gymnastics as well as nudism.²²⁰

²¹² A. Baubérot, *Histoire du naturisme*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, pp. 9–15.

²¹³ E.g. Jelm, Hygiène et anarchisme, *l’anarchie*, n. 133, 24 octobre 1907.

²¹⁴ Le Végétarisme et la question sociale, *Le Libéraire*, n. 79, 24–31 août 1901 ; Un mot sur le végétarisme, *Le Libéraire*, n. 84, 29 septembre-5 octobre 1903.

²¹⁵ J. Meline, La Culture Physique, *l’anarchie*, n. 103, 28 mars 1907.

²¹⁶ E. Petit, Les Vêtements, *l’anarchie*, n. 228, 19 août 1909.

²¹⁷ Cf. G. Giroud, *Les moyens d’éviter la grossesse*, 1908; J. Marestan, *L’éducation sexuelle*, Paris, L. Silvette, 1910 ; Lorulot, Procréation consciente, *l’anarchie*, n. 280, 18 août 1910.

²¹⁸ Libertad, in A. Colomer, *La Revue anarchiste*, décembre 1922.

²¹⁹ Steiner 2019, p. 48.

²²⁰ A. Colomer, Le romandes « bandits tragiques », *La Revue anarchiste*, décembre 1922.

l’abstention des actes d’état civil, le non-envoi des enfants aux écoles dépendantes de l’État ou de l’Église ; l’abstention de tout travail relatif à la fabrication d’engins de guerre ou d’objets de cultes officiels ... ou à la construction de banques, de casernes, d’églises, de prisons ...¹⁹¹

Although constructivists believe that civil disobedience is more efficacious than violent bloodshed in bringing about social change, they are not total pacifists. They acknowledge that social transformations are bound to include some form of conflict and crisis. Yet violence should only be used a last resort such as in situations of self-defence or when basic human rights are violated.

Revolution is the final stage of a long evolutionary process that has reached a tipping point. The constructivist’s view of revolution can be compared to Thomas Kuhn’s account of paradigm shifts in science. As more and more social “anomalies” arise within the “normal” capitalist and authoritarian paradigm, society is thrown into a state of “crisis”. During this phase, the constructivist seeks to create alternative ways of life and social structures. A revolution or social paradigm shift will take place when a sufficient number of anomalies have accrued, and that viable alternatives to the old system have been found. For the constructivist, this is how the gradual and peaceful transition from an archist to an anarchist society could occur.

For the constructivist, socio-political change begins with exposing the reality of voluntary servitude. It then requires that one cease to comply with the oppressive order. Finally, the constructivist inaugurates and experiments with new ways of life as well as new social frameworks, schemes, and structures. In

¹⁹¹ E. Armand, *Le Refus de Service Militaire et sa véritable signification*, Paris, l’Ère nouvelle, 1904, pp. 3–4.

what follows, I look at three such experiments, namely naturianism, libertarian colonies, and free love.

1. The Experimenter

a. Naturianism

Nous luttons contre le monstre Civilisation pour l'avènement de la Nature intégrale.

Henry Zisly

Régénérer l'homme par la régénération de la terre.

Louis Rimbault

The naturian movement or naturianism was launched in Paris in 1894. The painter and illustrator Émile Gravelle,¹⁹² inspired by the indigenous people he witnessed in Argentina, was the main instigator of the trend along with Henry

¹⁹² Émile Gravelle was born in Douai in 1855. He was a painter, writer, and activist. He began associating with the anarchist milieu in 1894, when he began co-editing *L'État Naturel* (1894–1898), the seminal journal of the naturist and vegan movements. He then founded *Le Sauvage* (1898–1899). He also published articles in various individualist and naturist periodicals such as *L'Idée Libre*, *Naturien* (1898), *La Nouvelle Humanité* (1898), *L'Ordre Naturel* (1905), *La Vie Naturelle* (1907–1914), as well as *Pendant la mêlée* (1915–1916). Drawing on the fifteenth-century shepherd and religious revolutionary Hans Böhm, Gravelle believed in an egalitarian society based on natural law. He briefly took part in Libertad's *causeries populaires* in 1906.

The impact of naturianism was limited. Naturians were never taken seriously by mainstream anarchists, many of whom saw them as little more than foolish, if not deranged, utopians and eccentrics. Jean Grave, for instance, systematically refused to publish their writings in *Les Temps Nouveaux*.²⁰⁸ Nor did they have any significant impact on the French proletariat. Some anarchists were also sceptical of naturians' personal commitment to their far-fetched ideas. It is true that naturianism was primarily an idyllic vision about which its protagonists spent more time fantasizing and writing than putting into practice.²⁰⁹ Naturian ideas were mostly translated into art rather than politics. As the many songs, poems, illustrations, and paintings describing a mythological arcadia testify, they were deeply inspired by Romantic nostalgia.²¹⁰ The wish to establish a naturist colony was expressed as early as 1895, but none were ever established by the first generation of naturians.²¹¹ Naturian propaganda by the deed consisted mainly in sharing vegetarian meals and sleeping under the stars in the Bois de Boulogne. Despite their limited impact, naturians can legitimately be considered the first anarcho-primitivists and pioneers of the ecological movement. Later anarchoindividualist naturians were influenced by another, more moderate movement, that intersected with the naturian movement, namely naturism.

Naturism

Less radical than naturianism, naturism had a more durable influence on the individualist milieu and on society at large. Naturists' return to nature was less radical than that of naturi-

²⁰⁸ E.g. Grave 1973, p. 539.

²⁰⁹ Zisly, for instance, dressed like any other city dweller and rarely left his cosy Parisian flat. A. Laforge, *La Vie naturelle des naturiens*, *L'Idée libre*, n. 21, août 1913.

²¹⁰ G. Manfredonia, *La Chanson anarchiste en France, des origines à 1914*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, pp. 157, 210, 355.

²¹¹ E. Gravelle, *L'État naturel*, n. 2, février 1895.

anarchists (e.g. Reclus, Kropotkin) and some individualists (e.g. Jules Bariol, Lorulot) who tended to idealize it, if not treat it as a new religion.²⁰⁶ In a similar vein, they rejected the Enlightenment idea of progress through reason alone. They denounced all forms of domestication of nature, be it deforestation, mechanization, or cities. Indeed, they condemned civilization as a whole. For Beylie and Zisly, the quest for the state of nature amounted to a radical rupture with social values and a retreat from the world. On the other hand, other naturians such as Bariol only wanted to moderate the excesses of industrial civilization without renouncing the benefits of progress.²⁰⁷ Like the majority of anarchists, they were in favour of mechanization insofar as it constituted a way of reducing one's workload. Paul Signac's 1893–1895 painting *Au Temps d'harmonie* (originally called *Au Temps d'anarchie*) illustrates the vision of harmonious convergence of naturism and industrial progress by depicting an arcadian scene with a train and a steamship in the background. There was thus a split between naturians who were antagonistic towards science and those who believed in its emancipatory power.

Following Gravelle's desertion from the movement, references to the Golden Age were no longer taken literally; they became a metaphorical opposition to the ideas of progress and revolution. More forward-looking than Gravelle, naturians did not harbour Romantic nostalgia for a primitive era so much as an aspiration to build a society that would be in greater harmony with the ecosystem. Their version of the state of nature that was also less ambitious and demanding: they yearned for a simpler existence, free from superficial and superfluous needs and possessions. Personal transformation took precedence over greater socio-ecological change.

²⁰⁶ H. Zisly, *En conquête vers l'État naturel*, Paris, 1899.

²⁰⁷ Legrand 17 juillet, 3 septembre 1901, Archives de la préfecture de police, BA 1508.

Zisly,¹⁹³ Henry Beylie,¹⁹⁴ and a handful of other individualist anarchists. In 1895 they founded the *naturiens libertaires*, a collective which brought together 'tous ceux qu'intéresse le retour à l'état de nature'.¹⁹⁵ Naturians believed that human beings living in modern industrialized society were undergoing a process of degeneration. In opposition to this dehumanizing drift, they strived to recover the state of nature and to live in accord with natural laws.

It is worth noting that this back-to-the-land drive was found across industrial societies, notably in Great Britain and Germany, where urbanization was more rapid and drastic than in France at the time.¹⁹⁶

Early naturians, most active in the last decade of the nineteenth century, were millennialists who sought to return to a Golden Age. They revived the Western myth of the state of

¹⁹³ Henri Zisly was born in Paris in 1872 to working-class parents living in free union. At age 17, he was already active in anarchist circles. He was one of the figureheads of the naturian movement. He co-edited *La Nouvelle Humanité*, which later became *Le Naturien* (1895–1898) with Henri Beylie and collaborated with Émile Gravelle on *l'État Naturel* (1899/1898). He wrote in numerous individualist journals, including articles on naturism and vegetarianism for *l'anarchie*. Zisly was one of the initiators of libertarian colonies. He lived in the Clairière de Vaux with Georges Butaud and Sophie Zaikowska in 1902. In 1908 married the milliner Marie Lucie Dusolon, with whom he had been living in free union for 10 years. He launched a naturist periodical *La Vie Naturelle* (1907–1920) and wrote the entries *Naturianisme*, *Naturocratie*, and *Naturophilie* in the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*. He participated to the foundation of the *Fédération anarchiste* in 1936.

¹⁹⁴ Henri Beylie (Félix Beaulieu) was born in Paris in 1870. He worked as a banker and an accountant. He joined the *naturiens libertaires* in 1895 and co-edited *La Nouvelle Humanité* (1895–1898) alongside Henri Zisly. He married Clémentine Bontoux in 1898. He participated in the establishment of the *Ligue antimilitariste* with Paraf-Javal and Libertad in 1902. He was one of the initiators of the *milieu libre* movement, and was one of the colonists of the *Milieu libre de Vaux* (1903/1907). He gravitated towards communist anarchist from 1905 onwards.

¹⁹⁵ Archives de la Préfecture de police, Paris, BA 1508.

¹⁹⁶ P. C. Gould, *Early Green Politics*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988.

nature, which can be traced from Rousseau all the way back to Greco-Roman literature. Humans, the story goes, have been corrupt by civilization.¹⁹⁷ In the state of nature, they lived harmoniously in lush forests and were free to flourish as individuals.¹⁹⁸ Prior to the rise of agriculture, nature was bountiful and provided enough food and resources for humans who knew neither toil nor disease.¹⁹⁹ In contrast to this vision of nature prior to civilization as an Edenic Golden Age, naturians viewed the history of civilization as one of utter decadence. “Natural” disasters and climate changes were seen as the result of man’s domestication of nature.²⁰⁰ Social ills, moral vices, mental and physical disabilities, but also prostitution, tyranny, and slavery were all regarded as products of civilization.²⁰¹ Naturians’ fierce condemnation of modern society and industrial urbanization was proportional to their idealization of prehistory and the state of nature. The factory worker was depicted as the epitome of degeneration, whilst the noble savage was regarded as the archetype of individual freedom. For naturians, the myth of arcadia had replaced that of revolution.

The nucleus of the first wave of naturians was composed of half a dozen individuals. Gravelle, then in his early 40s, was the figurehead of the movement, which he led until his partner’s death in 1898. He was a quasi-prophetic figure who appeared to be announcing the dawn of a new age. He had six main disciples as well as a dozen other active followers. Most notable amongst them were Beylie and Zisly, both in their 20s, who became the chief conductors of the

¹⁹⁷ For further discussion on Rousseau and his place in the naturien movement and individualist anarchism, see T. L’Aminot, Jean-Jacques au beau pays de Nature, *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, n. 40, 1993.

¹⁹⁸ E. Gravelle, La Formation de la Terre, *La Nouvelle Humanité*, mars-avril 1897.

¹⁹⁹ Notre Base, *L’État Naturel*, n. 3, juillet-août 1895.

²⁰⁰ E. Gravelle, Démonstration, *L’État naturel*, n. 3, juillet-août 1897.

²⁰¹ E. Gravelle, *L’État naturel*, n. 1 juillet 1894.

movement after Gravelle’s departure. Naturians were mainly artists and literati leading bohemian lives in Montmartre or Bastille. These included acrobats, singers, writers, actors, and playwrights.²⁰² Like most individualist anarchists, many of them were also artisans, such as cobblers, upholsterer, wood sculptors, carpenters, and milliners, whose work was being made obsolete by industrialization and mechanisation. Naturianism was in part a reaction to the gradual erosion of their social identity: it gave them a common horizon to look to.

Naturians organized weekly meetings as well as monthly conferences and feasts, which were advertised in the anarchist press.²⁰³ Attendance never exceeded a few dozen people: 5–12 people participated in weekly meetings, and 20–50 people took part in monthly events according to police reports.²⁰⁴ The main naturian periodicals were Gravelle’s *L’État naturel* (1894–1898) as well as Zisly and Beylie’s *La Nouvelle Humanité* (1895–1898) and *Le Naturien* (1898).²⁰⁵ Gravelle’s followers tried to keep the movement alive until 1900 with limited success. Later naturian journals included Zisly’s *La Vie naturelle* (1907–1927) and Hervé Coatmeur’s *Sphinx individualiste* (1913–1938) published in Brest, Brittany.

From 1900 naturians’ view of science diverged at a time when scientific advances were as numerous as they were momentous. Radioactivity and X-rays had just been discovered, whilst electricity and the telephone were just beginning to be widely used. In Paris, the first metro line had just been opened. Some naturians repudiated science, unlike most mainstream

²⁰² Aux artistes naturiens, *La vie naturelle*, n. 2, juillet-août 1908. See Finot, 15 mai 1895, Archives de la Préfecture de police de Paris, BA 80.

²⁰³ F. Jarrige, *Gravelle, Zisly et les anarchistes naturiens contre la civilisation industrielle*, Neuvy-en-Champagne, le passager clandestin, 2016.

²⁰⁴ Archives de la Préfecture de police, BA 1508.

²⁰⁵ See also Gravelle’s *Le Sauvage satirique* (4 issues in 1898) and Alfred Marné’s *L’Age d’or* (1 issue in 1900).

peace and harmony. Rather, revolution is to be enacted in the ordinary here and now through the transformation of all dimensions of life. This is done by creating and experimenting with alternative ways of life, which may be found beyond the confines of the anarchist tradition. In a world wherein there is bound to be a plurality of *weltanschauungen*, the anarchist vision of social harmony is one among many. Anarchists seek unity and solidarity whilst being committed to the intrinsic value of diversity. Ibañez's four core elements of contemporary anarchism are: utopianism, prefiguration, constructivism, and diversity.

The second way in which scholars have argued that contemporary anarchism differs from classical anarchism is in terms of anarchists' sociological backgrounds and relation to the rest of the anarchist movement. The figure of the working-class anarchist activist no longer reflects reality.³ As early as in 1996 Mimmo Pucciarelli noted that an increasing number of anarchists came from the salaried middle class, as opposed to the proletariat – a trend that can be dated back to the 1980s.⁴ It has also been observed that most present-day libertarians appear not to be concerned with historical disagreements about ideology or organization within the movement. They do not feel the need to identify with or unite around a particular school

³ One may ask if this image ever reflected reality since most classical anarchists were artisans. According to Pucciarelli's research, only 6–7% of anarchists in the 1990s had a working-class background. M. Pucciarelli, *L'imaginaire des libertaires aujourd'hui*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1999, p. 128. It is worth noting that Women anarchist remain a minority. See Pucciarelli 2000, p. 50.

⁴ M. Pucciarelli, *L'anarchisme, une denrée pour les classes cultivées ?*, A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire. Actes du colloque international, Grenoble, mars 1996*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, pp. 397–430. Based on a 1962 survey from the English journal *Freedom*, the younger the anarchist, the more likely they were to belong to the middle class. Only 10% of those between 20 and 30 were from the working class. Cf. *Anarchy*, 12 Feb. 1962.

them than their practical participation in the external affairs of the mundane world.²⁹²

This attitude is not restricted to the upper echelons of society. Writing in the early 1920s, Weber refers to a 'quasi-proletarian (proletaroid) intellectualism', mentioning specifically 'the socialistanarchist proletarian intelligentsia in the West'.²⁹³ The intellectual conceives of existence as a problem of meaning. They seek to find rational justification to their life and to their place in the cosmos. The intellectual flight from the world is due to the clash between their longing for meaning and the disenchanting reality of the world and its institutions. This may result in:

an escape into absolute loneliness, or in its more modern form ... to a nature unspoiled by human institutions. Again, it may be a world-fleeing romanticism like the flight to the "people," untouched by social conventions ... It may be more contemplative, or more actively ascetic; it may primarily seek individual salvation or collective revolutionary transformation of the world in the direction of a more ethical status.²⁹⁴

All in all, individualist anarchists – be they *Naturiens*, *naturalistes*, *néo-naturiens*, *naturarchistes*, *naturocrates*, *naturophiles* – were pioneers of the ecological movement as well as the first anarcho-primitivists.

Seeking to make sense of their place in the world and to re-enchant it, they contributed to the emergence of an undogmatic and immanent sacred-wild mythology. The naturian movement was also a source of inspiration and catalyst for the foundation of libertarian colonies, the *milieux libres*.

²⁹² Ibid, p. 504.

²⁹³ Ibid, p. 507.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 505.

b. Milieux libres

Préparer pour tous ce qui est déjà possible pour les quelques-uns que nous sommes, une société harmonieuse d'hommes conscients, prélude d'un monde de liberté et d'amour.

La Colonie d'Aiglemont

Nous sommes simples, végétariens, abstinentes, et nous fondons notre espoir de vie communiste sur le développement de la conscience, du sentiment, de la volonté, du courage, de l'initiative individuelle et la non-violence entre camarade.

La Colonie de Vaux

At the dawn of the twentieth century anarchists founded communities, known as *milieux libres* or *colonies libertaires*.²⁹⁵ These libertarian colonies differed from socialist utopias in several ways: they were more flexible, displayed a greater respect for the individual, and had less ambitious goals. Colonies were first and foremost a means to escape factory workers' atrocious and dehumanizing existence – the twelve-hour work-day, the humiliating living conditions, and the authoritarian milieu – that rendered any aspiration to self-development virtually impossible:²⁹⁶ 'Le premier souci du révolté est la libération du salariat, lequel implique toujours soumissions, prostitutions, activité machinale'.²⁹⁷ In this sense, they were 'oragnisme[s] d'opposition, de resistance'.²⁹⁸ Colonists sought to live accord-

²⁹⁵ Other names include *colonie examplariste*, *micromodèle*, *îlot communiste*, *expérience de communisme libre*, *expérience d'entraide*, *camp d'expérimentation*, *exercices utopiques communautaires*, *colonie communiste*, *colonie individualiste*. See M. Antony, *Essais utopiques libertaires de petite dimension*, 2005.

²⁹⁶ Note that Sunday only became an official and secular day of rest in 1906.

²⁹⁷ Un nouveau milieu libre, *Le Libertaire*, 31 mars 1907.

²⁹⁸ E. Armand, *Milieux de vie en commun et « colonies »*, Paris, Éd. de l'en dehors, 1931, p. 1.

II. Neo-Anarchism

Many writers hold that there has been a paradigm shift within anarchism. First, philosophers and political theorists have contended that there was an ideological divide between classical anarchism and postanarchism. I have showed that this divide was vastly exaggerated and misguided. There is a second way in which scholars believe that anarchism today differs from that of the past. Sociologists such as Mimmo Pucciarelli, Alain Pessin, Thomas Ibañez, and Ronald Creagh have argued that contemporary anarchism – or “neo-anarchism” as they sometimes call it – differs from classical anarchism not so much in terms of philosophical principles as sociological composition.¹

Their account of neo-anarchism is twofold. The first strongly echoes that of postanarchists and hence will only be sketched out briefly. Ibañez provides a good illustration of a common account of neo-anarchism.² He argues that contemporary anarchism is characterized by the belief in and creation of alternative ways of life in the present, which draw upon other social movements and schools of thought. Ibañez's account can be summed up as follows: contemporary anarchists are utopians insofar as they believe that another world is possible. Utopianism is not idealism; it is the impetus needed to work towards the creation of a better social order. This utopian vision is not teleological, let alone eschatological. It is not hope in a future revolution that will bring about

¹ G. N. Berti, *Un'idea esagerata di libertà*, Milan, Elèuthera, 1994, p. 20; M. Pucciarelli 1997, p. 22.

² Ibañez 2014, pp. 87–95.

turn to further sociological studies to shed greater light on the individualist dimension of contemporary anarchism.

farmers and thousands of other ordinary citizens of diverse ages and social backgrounds constitutes a powerful force against neoliberal corporations and statist institutions. See M. Verdier, *La perspective de l'autonomie*, PhD Thesis, Paris 10, 2018.

ing to the communist principal “From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs”. The *milieux libres* were meant to provide an environment in which individuals could live and thrive as anarchists:

Nous avons résolu de tenter une expérience de communisme libre Nous voulons constituer une « colonie libertaire », nous voulons par la pratique de nos idées, dans ce qu’elles ont de plus réalisable dans une société autoritaire, prouver par l’exemple que c’est dans le communisme libre qu’il est nécessaire de rechercher le bonheur individuel.²⁹⁹

Colonies welcomed anarchists of diverse tendencies and sensibilities, including materialists, spiritualists, scientists, and naturists: ‘tout ce que la flore non-conformiste est susceptible d’engendrer a peuplé et constitué ces groupements’.³⁰⁰ Many colonists, including the most dedicated architects of the *milieux libres*, namely Butaud and Zaïkowska, were individualists. In fact, almost half of the 25 or so colonies founded between 1902 and 1922 were started by individualists. The *milieux libres* were described as ‘œuvre[s] de régénération et de libération individuelle’ and ‘centre[s] d’individualisme éclairé’.³⁰¹ One of the chief aim of the *milieux libres* was to provide an environment away from industrialism, wage labour, and the pernicious influences of the archist order in which conscious individuals could come together to work towards personal emancipation.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ *Le Libertaire*, 13 septembre 1902.

³⁰⁰ E. Armand, *Milieux de vie en commun et colonies*, Paris, ed. de l’En dehors, 1931. See also *Le Libertaire*, 13 septembre 1902.

³⁰¹ L. Rimbault, *La Terre Libérée, Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 14, octobre-novembre 1923; n. 16, février 1924.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

In France, anarchists began to contemplate establishing colonies in the early 1900s.³⁰³ The *Société pour la création et le développement d'un milieu libre en France* was founded in 1902 with 200 subscribers (the number doubled within a year). It counted prominent individualists in its ranks such as Zaïkowska, Butaud, Beylie, Zisly, George Deherme, Paraf-Javal, Marie Kugel, and E. Armand, the project's originator. Two colonies saw the light of day in 1903: *Le Milieu libre de Vaux* (Aisne) and *L'Essai d'Aiglemont* (Ardennes).³⁰⁴ The former lasted four years and the latter six years. A dozen other colonies were established in the following years.³⁰⁵ These experiments were by and large short-lived: most colonies did not last more than one or two years. Only three lasted several years, all of which were located in the north east of France, namely the two aforementioned colonies in addition to the *Colonie naturiste et végétarienne de Bascon* (Aisne), which was the longest-lasting (1911–1951). It has been estimated that about 75 men and 30 women, mostly in their thirties, took an active part in the *milieux libres*, which probably never numbered more than about 20 individuals at any one time.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ A number of colonies had already been established mainly in Latin America during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The best-known and most thoroughly studied is probably La Cecilia (1890–1894) in Brazil. Cf. I. Felici, *La Cecilia, histoire d'une communauté anarchiste et de son fondateur Giovanni Rossi*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 2001. It is worth noting that several early twentieth century French anarchists emigrated to South America in hopes of founding colonies. Cf. L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 16, janvier 1924.

³⁰⁴ The Vaux colony was founded by Georges Butaud and Sophie Zaïkowska. The Essai d'Aiglemont was founded by Fortuné Henry, Émile Henry's brother. See G. Narrat, *La colonie libertaire d'Aiglemont*, Publications périodiques de la « Question Sociale », octobre 1997 [1908].

³⁰⁵ For a detailed list of projects, colonies, and free spaces, see Beaudet 2006, pp. 219–21.

³⁰⁶ For example, there were a dozen people at the Bascon colony in the winter and twice that number in the summer. G. Butaud, *Le Néo-naturien*, n. 8, novembre 1922, p. 15; Beaudet 2006, p. 187; Narrat 1997 [1908], pp. 8–11.

and the abstraction of much recent academic theorizing' such as postanarchism.³⁰ In short, we need more anthropological and sociological accounts of anarchist practices on the ground and of the various ways in which the micro-cum-personal can be interwoven with the macro-cum-socio-political.³¹ Let us

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Many case studies come to mind. Large-scale ones include Rojava in Syria and the ZAD movement in France. In the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, great structural changes have been put into place to ensure that women are equal to men. Dual leadership (*hevserok*) was implemented in all institutions. Childhood and forced marriages as well as polygamy were banned. Cases of patriarchal violence are handled by the women's peace committee. In addition to the women-only militia and protection units, women created their own communes, councils, education and research centres, and journals. However, they are aware that this will not erase patriarchy, which is also a deep-seated prejudice in people's mind. There is a one-year programme of male reconditioning, intended to "kill the man within them". There are academies of gynology (women's studies). See M. Knapp, A. Flach, & E. Ayboga, *Revolution in Rojava*, London, Pluto Press, 2016.

A ZAD (*Zone à Défendre*) is an occupation of a geographical site to oppose a development project considered harmful to the ecosystem. Having emerged from climate camps in England, ZADs flourished in France, bringing together the urban squat culture with that of rural communes. Zadists deploy different non-violent political and direct-action tactics, ranging from blockades to negotiation, and possibly including sabotage and property destruction. In parallel, they work towards the construction of an alternative society and the transformation of everyday life through alternatives such as barter or non-capitalist economic transactions, sustainable food production, green construction, horizontal decisionmaking procedures, or undifferentiated gender roles. Since the occupation of Notre-Dame-des-Landes (Loire-Atlantique) in 2012, a now defunct airport extension project and France's largest and most notorious ZAD, many others have surfaced throughout the country. These were against such projects as a motorway, a holiday village, a golf course, a dam, a marina, or a megachurch. According to a 2018 article from *Le Figaro* (4 Jan.) 50 development projects may be targeted by the Zadists. The formation of a ZAD is becoming an increasingly common strategy, which is gaining more and more support from the public. Although they have not managed to remain independent from the State, the ZADs nonetheless represent some of the most significant loci of anarchist experiments in Europe today. The collaboration of anarchists, eco-activists, local

of anarchist studies by generating a wealth of new writings debunking clichéd perceptions of the movement and paying greater heed to its history, theory, practices, and aspirations.²⁴ It allowed scholars to note the sophistication of classical anarchists and led to the emergence of more promising philosophical approaches such as Benjamin Franks's pragmatic anarchism based on a social account of virtue ethics.²⁵

I suggest that postanarchism could benefit from the contribution of more empirical and pragmatist approaches to the movement. An illustration of such an approach can be found in the work of Canadian social scientist and activist Jeff Shantz. His 'constructive anarchy' is a sociological examination of 'politics grounded in everyday resistance' or 'real world attempts to radically transform social relations in the here and now of everyday life' and in longer-term settings.²⁶ These projects endeavour to take into account the demands of the individual as well as those of the collective and seek to form 'the structure of the new world in the shell of the old':²⁷ 'A constructive anarchy or an anarchy of everyday life, at once conservative (preserving relations of mutual aid, solidarity and self-determination) and revolutionary (seeking to transform social relations and end statist and capitalist domination).'²⁸ Thorough field analyses of anarchist strategies, projects, and ways of life are few and far between. Social scientists like Shantz 'offer a glimpse into what is actually involved in anarchist organizing'.²⁹ They show us 'what anarchists are actually doing, beyond both the hype of mainstream media reports

²⁴ Newman & Rouselle 2013, p. 87.

²⁵ B. Franks, Postanarchism and meta-ethics, *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 16, n. 2, 2008; Anarchism and the virtues, B. Franks & M. Wilson (eds), *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; *Anarchism, Postanarchisms and Ethics*, London, Rowman and Littlefield, 2019.

²⁶ J. Shantz, *Constructive Anarchy*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, pp. 1, 16.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 10.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

Not all colonists were French: a few came from other countries, including Central and Eastern Europe.³⁰⁷

Many were artisans: clobbers, bonnet-makers, wheelwrights, stonemasons, mechanics, tailors, armourers, gardeners, carpenters.³⁰⁸ There were also several farmers.³⁰⁹ They usually kept practicing their trade, which was their main source of income outside of the harvest season.

Life was harsh for *milieux libristes* who had to face natural as well as communal setbacks. The gruelling reality of farming on coarse land combined with extremely limited financial means was an ongoing source of tension and dispute. The preponderance of men bred jealousy and generated clashes regarding divergent conceptions of sexual liberation and free love. What is more, colonists were not all equally committed to the cause. Inner conflict sometimes led to the departure of some and exclusion of others. The colonies' founders sometimes ended up imposing their decisions in an apparently authoritarian manner so that the project could remain true to its initial libertarian vision.³¹⁰

Limiting the number of colonists was sometimes a conscious choice. There were several children in the colonies, some of them were even born there. There were also many non-human animals. For example, in October 1903 there were 90 hens; 50 ducks; 50 rabbits; 1 cow; 1 small horse; 6 goats; and 50 pigeons in Aiglemont. Narrat 1997 [1908], p. 22.

³⁰⁷ In his autobiographical novel *Parcours* (1955), the writer Georges Navel wrote that there were people of diverse nationalities at the Bascon colony. There was a Hungarian naturist and theosopher and a Polish woman at the Vaux colony. See *L'Ère Nouvelle*, juillet-août 1904; L. Descaves, La Clairière de Vaux, *Le Journal*, 7 juin 1903. The first colonist in Aiglemont was Italian. See Narrat 1997 [1908], p. 17.

³⁰⁸ Colonie de Vaux bulletin mensuel de décembre 1903. T. Legendre, *Expériences du vie communautaire anarchiste en France*, Paris, Les Éditions libertaires, 2006.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Cf. L. Legris, *L'Ère Nouvelle*, mars-avril 1904. Accused of authoritarianism, Butaud, Zaïkowska, and Henry left (or were banished) from the colonies they had founded.

Despite those difficulties, one should not view colonies' ephemeral nature as failed attempts to establish an anarchist society. Individualists advocated free and voluntary association from which they could opt out at any stage. The aim was not necessarily to establish a permanent community. Rather, they were 'practical communist experiments' or 'sociological experiments' that could end at any point.³¹¹ Life in the *milieux libres* was emotionally and psychologically demanding. For this reason, Armand thought it was unrealistic to require people to settle in colonies indefinitely:

Les cellules aptes à vivre dans le milieu spécial s'usent plus rapidement que dans le milieu ordinaire, en raison de l'intensité de leur activité. N'oublions pas que non seulement les constituants des groupes communistes ont à lutter contre l'ennemi extérieur (la société dont l'effroyable organisation enserre le noyau communiste à l'étouffer), mais encore ... contre l'ennemi intérieur : préjugés mal éteints qui renaissent de leurs cendres, lassitude inévitable, parasites ... Il est donc illogique de demander aux « colonies » chose qu'une durée limitée.³¹²

That said, it is true that some were hoping to create more and more of these islands of freedom so as to give rise to a sustainable archipelago, which would eventually transform society as a whole: 'Si ... comme nous l'espérons et le souhaitons, la colonie marche il s'en créera d'autres qui, petit à petit, transformeront la société et donneront naissance à la liberté individuelle, à la vie harmonique'.³¹³ Charles Malato established

³¹¹ *Le Libertaire*, 13 septembre 1902; Zaïkowska 1929, p. 30.

³¹² E. Armand, *L'Ère Nouvelle*, décembre 1905.

³¹³ En marche vers la Colonie libertaire, *Le Réveil de l'Esclave*, novembre 1902. See also *La Vie Anarchiste*, 5 mars 1912.

that there can be no final liberation, there can still be a radical transformation of social institutions. Anarchism, one could argue, needs dissidents as well as dissenters, rebels as well as mavericks, Communards as well as soixante-huitards. In other words, it needs insurrectionists, egoists, and constructivists.

I contend that it is important to take into consideration the dialectical relationship between the personal and political, as individualists who fought against both internal and external tyrants came to realize over a century ago. The belief that the micro-cum-personal is under our control, not the macro-cum-transpersonal, or that the former will necessarily follow from the latter is an unhelpful dichotomy. One can never fully re-condition oneself insofar as one can never fully extract oneself from institutions, for they form the very fabric of our existence as social beings. In a world of social arrangements, self-arrangements can only go so far. Institutional change and personal change must therefore go hand in hand. Reducing revolution to personal micro-insurrection does not only amount to renouncing social transformation on a larger scale and in the longer term; it also fails to achieve its own end of subjectification in the here and now. The creation of new selves and of new social structures is the dialectical momentum of human (r)evolution. We should also be reminded – as constructivist-individualists realized – that the self is produced and constantly shaped not merely by institutions, but in relation to other living entities and to the rest of its environment. We are not islands unto ourselves, but interconnected and interdependent social animals embedded in complex and fragile ecosystems. The work of anarchy should thus be simultaneously individual and collective as well as institutional and environmental.

Through theory alone, Newman (alongside other postanarchists) managed to recover some of the core beliefs, values, and practices of the individualist dimension of classical anarchism. What is more, postanarchists contributed to the growth

French individualists. Newman seems to run up against the same potential shortcomings as his historical forebearers. The conclusion that there can be no emancipation other than self-emancipation can appear to amount to relinquishing all hope of large-scale social transformation.²⁰ Indeed, by making freedom ‘a question of self-empowerment’, Newman risks divesting the concept of any real social force and fosters macro-political inertia.²¹ Although Newman ultimately recognizes that ‘domination is as much a state of mind as a real material condition’, he tends to overstate the importance of the former to the detriment of the latter.²² Newman’s statements regarding ‘indifference to power’, and freedom being ‘a matter of the will’ seem to underplay the existence of all too real economic, material, and institutionalized forms of domination.²³

As the foregoing historical account of anarcho-individualism has demonstrated, domination operates on various levels and hence requires different acts of resistance. Our more refined understanding of the all-pervasive nature of power leads us to broaden and multiply our sites of struggle. It does not, however, eliminate the coercive power of political and economic institutions. There is certainly a great amount of voluntary servitude in our society, but one should not underplay the impact of systemic forces of oppressions. Self-transformation and forms of micro-resistance will not make macro-oppressions and structural exploitation disappear. Thus, revolution, in the sense of the collective endeavour to destroy authoritarian institutions to bring about large-scale systemic change, is as worth fighting for as insurrection in the sense of the personal reconfiguration of internalized power dynamics. Although coercive power can never be fully overcome, such

²⁰ Newman 2019, pp. 159–60.

²¹ Ibid, p. 160.

²² Newman 2019, p. 167.

²³ Newman 2011, p. 172; 2019, p. 160.

some middle ground between these divergent views by arguing that colonies were both ends in themselves and means to an end insofar as they provided an environment in which individualists were better able to pursue their process of self-transformation: ‘il faut changer l’individu pour modifier le milieu et s’attaquer en même temps au milieu pour transformer l’individu, l’un réagissant sur l’autre.’³¹⁴

One of the colonists’ central objectives was to show that an alternative social order – both another life and another world – was possible. They were spaces wherein anarchist ideas could be applied, tested, and refined. The aim was to try one’s best to live the anarchist life here and now by founding a stateless and classless society free from all forms of exploitation and domination. As Armand put it: ‘Je ne vois pas d’autre moyen que de réaliser dès maintenant dans la société actuelle, autant que faire se peut bien entendu, notre idéal d’une société communiste anarchiste.’³¹⁵ Anarchists wanted to show that there could be a social order without private property and without money, without hierarchy and without authority. As Butaud, the instigator of the first *milieu libre* wrote: ‘L’expérience tend à démontrer que les hommes conscients peuvent vivre sans règles, sans codes par le libre jeu de leurs besoins, de leurs aspirations, de leurs facultés.’³¹⁶ It is in this sense that Armand described colonies as ‘organisme[s] de résistance’.³¹⁷

Colonies were an opportunity to show what the state of anarchy is meant to be, namely harmony, peace, and tranquility. They gave the general public a glimpse of what an anarchist society could be like and portrayed its proponents in a new light, far from the stereotypical images of hateful terrorists circulated by the media.³¹⁸ As Fortuné Henry stated: ‘Le

³¹⁴ C. Malato, cited in E. Armand, *L’Ère nouvelle*, n. 31, juillet-août 1904.

³¹⁵ E. Armand, *Le Libéraire*, 27 novembre 1903.

³¹⁶ G. Butaud, *Simple réflexions d’un colon*, *L’Ère Nouvelle*, juin 1903.

³¹⁷ E. Armand, *L’Ère Nouvelle*, décembre 1905.

³¹⁸ V. Serge, *Le Communiste*, n. 11, 18 avril 1908.

paysan ne comprend pas l'anarchiste vitupérant à la tribune contre l'autorité. Mais il comprend l'anarchiste prenant la pioche et fertilisant le sol ingrat et il est frappé par le spectacle de gens heureux que nous lui donnons'.³¹⁹

Colonies were not meant to substitute other anarchist strategies, but to complement them: 'La colonie est *un moyen* éducatif au même titre mais plus accentué que la coopérative communiste, l'école libertaire, l'atelier communiste'.³²⁰ The *milieux libristes* did not seek total withdrawal from society.³²¹ Quite the reverse, colonies were often established in close proximity to militant hotbeds and offered a place where activists could rest. Their members kept up to date with local social struggles in which they sometimes took part. Colonies also acted as centres of propaganda and education.³²² They often included (or wished to have) a printing shop, a journal, a library, and a school. In addition to the publication of brochures and journals, colonists organised discussions and colloquia on diverse themes ranging from neo-Malthusianism to anti-militarism, including the community's own organization. As André Mounier, a member of the *Essai d'Aiglemont* made clear:

Il ne faut pas croire que la constitution d'un milieu libre indique chez ses participants l'intention de s'évader de la Société pour manger tranquillement la soupe aux choux au coin d'un bois. Il ne constitue pas non plus un moyen infaillible d'amener la révolution. Il permet simplement à

³¹⁹ F. Henry, cited in F. Mommeja, Un phalanstère communiste, *Le Temps*, 11 juin 1905.

³²⁰ E. Armand, *L'Ère Nouvelle*, décembre 1905.

³²¹ This changed after the Great War when colonies became more secluded from the rest of society. See Beaudet 2006, p. 179.

³²² Cf. E. Lamotte, Action féconde, *Le Libertaire*, 4–11 novembre 1906.

glittering hopes on "institutions". It is not a fight against the established, since, if it prospers, the established collapses of itself; it is only a working forth of me out of the established.¹⁶

If revolution consists of practices of freedom, insurrection could be described as consisting of practices of ownership. This means focusing on 'political formations on a micro-political level, at the level of everyday relations and interactions, behaviours, and subjective positions'.¹⁷ What is needed is:

a politics of the ordinary – that is, of ordinary people in everyday situations ... enacting the equality and liberty that is denied to them, acting as though they are already free, putting into practice in a self-organised, autonomous way, the world they are wanting to build.¹⁸

According to Newman, postanarchism offers such a prefigurative anarchist theory:

[Postanarchism] is an anarchism understood not as [a] certain set of social arrangements, or even as a particular revolutionary project, but rather as a sensibility, a certain ethos or way of living and seeing the world which is impelled by the realization of the freedom that one already has.¹⁹

In brief, postanarchism is an aesthetics of existence grounded in permanent insurrection.

Drawing upon Stirner, Newman's analysis of freedom and revolution parallels that of some early twentieth-century

¹⁶ Stirner 1995, pp. 279–80.

¹⁷ Newman 2013, p. 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁹ Newman 2011, p. 114.

new practices of freedom'.⁸ He turns to Stirner's critique of freedom as an 'illusory abstraction' that conceals a 'deeper domination' to make his way through 'the cul-de-sac freedom finds itself in today'.⁹

Newman asserts that we need to fundamentally rethink the concept of freedom. On his view, the problem with freedom is that it depends on 'external conditions and institutions'.¹⁰ He maintains that freedom should not lie in 'a form of society'.¹¹ He finds an alternative to freedom in Stirner's notion of "ownness". Ownness is not dependent on external factors, but grounded in the individual's ontological condition.¹² External factors are anything that is not under the individual's control, be it the state, the law, morality, material conditions, or simply the actions of others.¹³ Our ontological condition is our intrinsic capacity to shape our inner life – our capacity for subjectification. Hence, ownness is characterized by 'self-possession' or 'self-mastery'.¹⁴ It is an 'ethical relationship to oneself, such that the individual is able to master her instincts, passions and desires, even her desires for external objects or for power over others'.¹⁵ Ownness, Newman concludes, should replace freedom.

The second key concept that Newman reconsiders in his most recent work is that of revolution. Instead of revolution – the making of new social structures –, we need insurrection – the refusal of being structured in the first place:

Insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no

⁸ Newman 2011, p. 181.

⁹ Newman 2019, p. 158.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 156.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 172.

¹² Ibid, p. 168.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 159–60.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 159–60, 170.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 170–1.

des hommes d'intensifier la propagande dont ils sont capables.³²³

Postcards depicting anarchists' work and utopian lifestyle were made and advertisements inviting the public were published in anarchist journals.³²⁴ The *milieux libres* welcomed numerous visitors and holidaymakers, especially on Sundays, the usual day off since the law on weekly rest was passed in July 1906. Visitors came in their dozens to show their support or simply out of curiosity. Although most of them were from Paris, some visitors travelled all the way from Central and Eastern Europe. Guests included artists, writers such as Hélène Patou and Georges Navel, as well as prominent anarchists such as Élisée Reclus and individualists such as Han Ryner. Even Lenin is said to have visited the Vaux colony during his sojourn in France in 1903.³²⁵

Colonists sought to be as self-sufficient as possible. This implied working and consuming differently, eating and drinking differently, washing and dressing differently, in short, changing each aspect of daily life to the smallest detail. They were ways to emancipate oneself from ingrained social habits and to seek to align one's thought and actions with one's political convictions. The goal, as Butaud described it, was: 'rechercher dans quelle mesure [l'individu] peut échapper à l'influence du milieu pour se dégager de son emprise'.³²⁶

Most of them practiced voluntary simplicity (*la simplicité volontaire*). As Butaud and Zaïkowska wrote:

Nous avons appris ... qu'il fallait émonder, supprimer tous les « gourmands » ... les « gourmands

³²³ A. Mounier, En communisme, *Publications périodique de la Colonie communiste d'Aiglemont*, avril 1906, vol. 3, p. 27.

³²⁴ Narrat 1997 [1908], p. 23.

³²⁵ M. Antony *Essais utopiques de petite dimension*, 2005.

³²⁶ G. Butaud, *L'individualisme anarchique et sa pratique*, Saint-Maur, B, 1913, p. 2.

» ce sont nos faux besoins. Nous avons donc été ramenés à une simplicité toujours plus grande. Nous avons refait l'éducation de nos besoins, et de nos gestes.³²⁷

Il importe donc, dès aujourd'hui, de soumettre nos désirs à une critique rationnelle, de rejeter nos besoins factices et particulièrement d'avoir une économie individuelle rigoureuse, pour que l'économie collective bien comprise soit rationnelle. Il faut étudier ses gestes, combattre ses mauvaises habitudes : c'est toute une éducation à refaire pour l'hygiène et l'existence ... L'homme qui s'enrichit n'est-il pas celui qui supprime de sa vie le luxe, l'inutile, l'excitant et qui assure de plus en plus normalement la satisfaction de ses besoins par une hygiène rigoureuse.³²⁸

Voluntary simplicity implied the radical minimization of material goods and the adoption of a vegetarian or vegan diet. Colonists also stopped consuming all goods that they could not produce themselves such as tobacco, sugar, alcohol, tea, and coffee. As Han Ryner noted after his visit in 1922:

Les colons basconnais s'abstiennent de tout excitant comme de tout stupéfiant, ignorent le tabac et le vin, le café et le thé. Ceux qui boivent, boivent de l'eau. Ils ne sont pas végétariens mais végétaliens ... même la plupart ne mangent plus que des fruits et des légumes crus ... Les colons se refusent aussi énergiquement à exploiter le travail de l'animal qu'à le tuer ou à lui voler son lait.³²⁹

³²⁷ G. Butaud, Letter to the *Foyer Végétalien* in Paris, S. Zaïkowska (ed.), *La vie et la mort de Georges Butaud*, Nice, Rosentitel, 1929, p. 20.

³²⁸ G. Butaud et S. Zaïkowska, *Étude sur le travail*, Bascon, Éd. du Milieu libre, 1912, pp. 7–8.

³²⁹ H. Ryner, *Journal du Peuple*, 28 août 1922.

anarchism to 'a deconstructive movement *within* anarchism'.⁴ His anachronistic quest led him to embrace Stirner as the archetypal historical postanarchist who 'foreshadows so much of poststructuralist thinking'.⁵ His efforts to reintroduce Stirner as a central anarchist theoretician have been made with a disconcerting obliviousness to the rich traditions of individualist anarchism that had already provided various interpretations of his thought.⁶ In fact, Newman treats Stirner as an ahistorical philosopher with no link to anarchism. He does not cite a single anarchist – let alone individualist – reader of Stirner and says nothing as to how his ideas have influenced the movement. It seems that Newman still seeks to re-invent anarchism with an unsettling ignorance of the movement's actors and history.

How does Newman draw upon Stirner to make positive claims regarding the latest articulation of postanarchism and the aims of radical politics today? Newman notes that domination under neoliberalism is more pervasive than it has ever been. It relies upon the individual's self-government and self-alienation or, as La Boétie famously put it, voluntary servitude.⁷ As a result, he argues, we need a 'libertarian micro-politics and ethics that aims at dislodging our psychic investments in power and authority through the invention of

⁴ S. Newman, *Anarchism and Law*, *Griffith Law Review*, vol. 21, n. 2, 2012, p. 324.

⁵ Newman & Rouselle 2013, p. 81. This is somewhat ironic given that Stirner predates the anarchist movement and never identified as an anarchist, thus making him a pre-anarchism postanarchist. It is worth noting that French scholars of anarchism are also developing a renewed interest in Stirner. E.g. O. Agard & F. Larillot (eds), *Max Stirner, L'Unique et sa Propriété : lectures critiques*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2017.

⁶ S. Newman, *Stirner and the Critique of Political Theology*, *Telos*, vol. 175, 2016; What is an Insurrection? Destituent Power and Ontological Anarchy in Agamben and Stirner, *Political Studies*, vol. 65, n. 2, 2017; Ownness created a new freedom: Max Stirner's alternative concept of liberty, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 22, n. 2, 2019.

⁷ Newman 2019, p. 158.

I. Postanarchism Re-visited

Our long detour through individualist anarchism allows us to see that the above-mentioned tripartite division of anarchist history (late nineteenth century to the Spanish Civil War, late 1960s, and late 1990s) is a simplification based upon a one-sided and overly intellectualized understanding of the movement. In truth, anarchism has always been composed of multiple and sometimes conflictual strands. The remark of the libertarian writer and journalist Nicholas Walter with regards to first- and second-wave anarchism also applies to third-wave anarchism: ‘there [is] no radical break between the “old” and the “new” anarchism, but an essential continuity between the two’.¹ Like Woodcock, early postanarchists simultaneously exaggerate ‘the rigidity of “old anarchism and the flexibility of “new” anarchism and the gap between the two’.² Hence, there is no great clash between modernity and postmodernity or between classical anarchism and postanarchism if one takes into accounts the multifarious manifestations of the libertarian movement, both communism and individualist.

Having delved a little deeper into the anarchist past, postanarchism has taken a new turn in the last five years. Rather than seeking to transcend classical anarchism, as they had originally intended, postanarchists now look for poststructuralist elements in the anarchist canon.³ As Newman writes, postanarchism has evolved from being a movement beyond

¹ Walter 1987, p. 175.

² Ibid, p. 176.

³ Newman & Rouselle 2013, pp. 74–9.

Colonists called into question the place of women in the community As Marie Kugel stated: ‘Toute femme sera libre d’elle-même sans que qui que ce soit puisse jamais porter atteinte à sa liberté’.³³⁰ ‘Il sera fait abstraction des sexes : on ne connaît que des individus libres’.³³¹ Similarly, Louis Rimbault asserted that at the colony Terre Libérée, ‘les deux sexes seront égaux en droit et en obligations’.³³² In one of the postcards depicting colonists’ life, we see a man doing laundry alongside a woman, illustrating anarchists’ aspiration for equality between men and women. In practice, however, there remained a division of labour between men and women. As a visitor to Vaux noted: ‘Deux femmes vaquaient à la cuisine, et l’on me dit que la lessive aussi leur incombait et qu’elles s’occupaient, par surcroît, des enfants’.³³³ Some women also followed their partners, without having personal anarchist convictions:

Il est regrettable de constater que sur sept femmes passées à Vaux, seulement trois avaient quelques idées, les autres étaient absolument ordinaires, et restaient sous l’entière dépendance de leur compagnon, ne comprenant qu’à peine ces mots bizarres, anarchie, communisme, etc.³³⁴

There were several limitations to the *milieux libres*, for colonists had divergent intentions for joining the community and for the community itself. Many people came not so much

³³⁰ M. Kugel, cited in Legendre 2006, p. 11.

³³¹ Cited in E. Berr, Congréganistes sans le savoir, *Le Figaro*, 12 mai 1903.

³³² L. Rimbault, *Le Néo-Naturien*, n. 15, 23 janvier 1924.

³³³ L. Descaves, La Clairière de Vaux, *Le Journal*, 7 juin 1903. The nuclear family model was sometimes abandoned. Marcel, who was born in the Aiglemont colony in 1905 and whose birth was originally not registered, was eventually declared ‘enfant de la colony’. See Narrat 1997 [1908], p. 30. Much remains to be said on the place of children in colonies.

³³⁴ La colonie de Vaux au jour le jour, *L’Ère Nouvelle*, n. 27, janvier-février 1904.

because they were eager to build something new as because they were keen to escape wage labour and society at large. What brought people together was not so much a positive vision of the world they wanted to build together as a rejection of the established order. They were often after a haven rather than a utopia. Those who were keen to construct new society were sometimes too attached to individual autonomy to establish new forms of organization which could have produced more stable and longer lasting communities. This is also because libertarian colonies were still at an experimental stage. As communist laboratories, they remained ephemeral islands of freedom.

The *milieux libres* played an important role in the individualist and broader anarchist milieu during the Belle Époque. They represent individualists' most comprehensive and practical attempt at laying the foundation for a new a social order. More importantly, through libertarian colonies, individualists came to appreciate the virtuous interplay between the self, the other, and the environment. Their aim was no longer simply to build an anarchist society, but a harmonious ecosystem. Human and non-human regeneration became concomitant and interdependent endeavours.

c. Free Love

Moi, je vois l'amour, enfin libre, faisant le pied de nez, aux vieux us et aux vieilles coutumes. Je vois l'amour faisant le pied de nez au vieux monde.

Lucienne Gervais

La révolution, en matière sexuelle, c'est de pouvoir s'entretenir de ce qui touche au sexualisme, de tout ce intéresse les choses de l'amour, c'est d'en parler, d'en

Part III: Contemporary Anarchists

celebration of originality and diversity. Finally, it shows that individualists were self-reliant, not self-centred; for even though personal gratification was an incentive for seeking companionship, the individualist re-evaluation of love was not a purely egoistic enterprise. Rather, it was an opportunity to create new kinds of relationship and association, which benefited both the individual and the collective, and which were hoped to have wider socio-political reverberations.

*écrire, d'en réaliser, d'en expérimenter,
sans se sentir repris au dedans de soi.*

E. Armand

Deconstructing conventional views and practices on love and sexuality was at the heart of the individualist project of self-transformation.³³⁵ Love, be it in the form of *philia* or *eros*, is central to our lives as social animals. It deals with our psychosomatic relations to our innermost selves as well as to other people.³³⁶ Individualist anarchists argued that, through religion and morality, authoritarian conditioning begins in such basic human relationships as those based on what we consider to be the product of love.

Sexual biases are a prime example of the inner enemies that the individualist seeks uproot in the here and now: 'S'il y est des réalisations éthiques immédiatement réalisables, ce sont celles d'ordre sexuel ; s'il est des préjugés dont on peut se débarrasser immédiatement, ce sont bien ceux-là'.³³⁷ An individual cannot be said to be free – to be a genuine anarchist – if they are not sexually emancipated. Armand and de Lacaze-Duthiers criticized the avant-garde, so-called *libre penseurs* (freethinkers), and alleged revolutionaries for remaining prone to reli-

³³⁵ Prior anarchists also wrote on love and sexuality. See generally W. Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, London, G. & J. Robinson, 1793; C. Fourier (1830), *Le nouveau monde industriel*, Paris, Bossange, 1830; J. Déjacque, *L'humanisphère*, 1859, *Le Libertaire*, New York, 1858–1861.

³³⁶ A. Giddens, *The transformation of Intimacy*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992.

³³⁷ E. Armand, *l'émancipation sexuelle, l'amour en camaraderie et les mouvements d'avant-garde*, Paris, Éd. de l'en dehors, 1934, p. 4.

gious and bourgeois prejudice when it came to sexual mores.³³⁸ 'On peut être antimilitariste, antipatriote et autres antisubversifs, ce n'est là qu'une demi-libération, tant qu'on est pas, en fait de sexualisme, complètement affranchi'.³³⁹ Sexual revolution is a necessary condition of personal as well as social revolution.³⁴⁰

Individualists discussed their visions of love, sexuality, and the place of women in society in various meetings and conferences, particularly during the *débats du Club des Insurgés* in the 1920s, which were partly transcribed in the periodical *l'Insurgé*. Armand is the individualist who wrote most profusely on free love and what he called revolutionary sexualism.³⁴¹ Indeed, as evidenced by the numerous articles he published in *l'En dehors* and *l'Unique*, it became one of his subjects of predilection from 1907 until his death in 1956. Armand claimed that sexual liberation was just as important as economic emancipation and that genuine social change required the integration of the two, for the latter is unlikely to bring about the former.³⁴² It is important to specify that Armand's account of love includes all manifestations of intimacy, be they sexual, emotional, or intellectual:

³³⁸ E. Armand, Ma causerie sur la camaraderie amoureuse, *l'Insurgé*, n. 53, 5 mai 1928; 1934, pp. 7–8; G. de LacazeDuthiers, *Moralité ou Sexualité ?*, Paris, Éd. de *l'en dehors*, 1934, p. 11.

³³⁹ Lacaze-Duthiers 1934, p. 11.

³⁴⁰ E. Armand, *l'en dehors*, n. 85–86, août 1926.

³⁴¹ For a concise summary of Armand's view on sexuality, see E. Armand, Sexualisme, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁴² E. Armand, *L'Ère nouvelle*, n. 39, 15 janvier 1906; Sexualisme, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

suivantes : 1) Pluralité, variété, simultanéité des expériences amoureuses ; 2) « Ménages » à plusieurs ou « foyers » multiples ; 3) Milieux de « vie en commun », « colonies » affinitaires basées sur le « toutes à tous, tous à toutes » ; 4) Échange des compagnes, compagnons, enfants, entre associations de cohabitants (couples, ménages, familles, etc.) ; 5) Satisfaction des besoins, désirs, aspirations, appétits de l'hospitalité ; 6) Coopératives de camaraderie amoureuse ou érotiques, etc
...⁴²¹

To sum up, individualists rejected conventional notions of love for they all too often imply seeing one's partner as one's property. On their view, sharing different forms of intimacy with another person is a basic human drive and need. Provided that it is respectful and consensual, any manifestation of love or any type of partnership is possible. Armand argued that polyamory was overall most compatible with the individualist understanding of life. Although the practical application of his *camaraderie amoureuse* never lived up to its theoretical aspirations, we find in it an ethically compelling vision of love that is no longer the be-all and end-all of human existence, but a dimension of *philia* based on the virtue of goodwill.

Our exploration of free love and revolutionary sexualism sheds light on three core aspects of individualist anarchism. First, the deconstruction of deep-seated biases such as jealousy and patriarchy illustrate the individualist revolt against inner tyrants, which precede or permeate institutionalized forms of domination. Second, it further demonstrates individualists' commitment to personal preferences along with their

⁴²¹ Le groupe Atlantis, Thèses fondamentales de l'association de combat contre la jalousie sexuelle, le propriétaireisme corporel et l'exclusivisme en amour, E. Armand, *La Révolution sexuelle et la camaraderie amoureuse*, Paris, Critique et raison, 1934.

camaraderie amoureuse and non-monogamy.⁴¹⁸ Colonies appeared to be less sectarian than Armand's associations. As Marie Kugel wrote:

À la colonie on ne tentera d'appliquer, en amour surtout, aucun système ; il ne s'agira pas plus de pratiquer la monogamie que la polygamie, la polyandrie ou la communauté absolue ; il s'agira de réaliser aussi complètement que possible l'harmonie et chacun déterminera sa vie en conséquence.⁴¹⁹

Few examples of unconventional intimate relationships remain. Zaïkowska recounted her partnership with Butand and Victor Lorenc, an individualist from Czech Republic:

Une grande conscience de la responsabilité de nos gestes individuels et de leur répercussion sociale, créa entre nous un lien d'affection durable. Nous avons su réaliser « l'amour plural », ce qui nous a permis à tous les trois d'être heureux, de nous améliorer et de faire un peu de bien.⁴²⁰

The fundamental theses of the *Groupe Atlantis*, one of Armand's collectives, provide an illuminating summary of individualists' aspirations with regards to the question of free love:

L'efficacité du combat contre la jalousie sexuelle, le propriétaireisme corporel et l'exclusivisme en amour, la disparition des empiètements et des crimes auxquels ces préjugés donnent lieu est fonction des conceptions ou revendications

⁴¹⁸ E. Armand, *Les Colonies communistes*, *L'Ère Nouvelle*, décembre 1905, n. 37–38.

⁴¹⁹ M. Kugel, cited in Legendre 2006, p. 11.

⁴²⁰ Zaïkowska 1929, p. 29.

Par amour, j'entends tantôt l'attirance ou la passion sexuelle, tantôt le désir et la satisfaction de l'appétit sexuel, satisfaction manifestée ou par le coït ou réalisée par le besoin de toucher, caresser, embrasser quelqu'un du sexe opposé, voire de jouir de sa présence, s'entretenir avec lui.³⁴³

Armand's writings on free love provide an illuminating example of the individualist threefold practices of freedom discussed at the end of Part I, namely personal deconstruction, emancipation/self-affirmation, and collective experimentation. They begin with an examination of conventional love and sexuality.

A Critique of Love and Sexuality

Conventional love, which is by and large the product of Christian and bourgeois morality is antonymous to the anarchist conception of life, for it amounts to turning a person into one's property.³⁴⁴ Indeed, it implies the appropriation or even the ownership of the other person (most of the time a woman), of their sexuality, sensuality, and sentimentality: 'L'amour ... une catégorie de l'archisme. Il est une monopolisation des organes sexuels, tactiles, de la peau et du sentiment d'un humain au profit d'un autre, exclusivement.'³⁴⁵ One should do away with all forms of propri-

³⁴³ E. Armand, *Amour, Amour en Liberté, Camaraderie amoureuse*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*. See also *Entretien sur la liberté de l'amour*, Orléans, Éd. de *l'en dehors*, 1910, p. 3; Armand 2014 [1923], p. 296.

³⁴⁴ E. Armand, *Le combat contre la jalousie*, *L'Insurgé*, n. 6, 11 juin 1925.

³⁴⁵ E. Armand, *La jalousie*, *Supplément à l'en dehors*, décembre 1930, p. 4. See also Armand 1934, p. 20.

etary love:³⁴⁶ 'Il appartient aux individualistes de combattre le propriétaire et l'exclusivisme en amour, qui font qu'un homme ou qu'une femme appartiennent à autrui comme un cheval ou un bicyclette'.³⁴⁷ The individualist repudiates all alleged expressions of love that constrain a person's capacity for self-determination.

Conventional love engenders jealousy, which may in turn prompt reckless behaviour such as crimes of passion and suicide.³⁴⁸ What is more, individualists hold that jealousy precedes all macro sociopolitical forms of domination. It can be thus considered a springboard for the domination of the few over the many.³⁴⁹ Armand distinguished between two main types of jealousy: one that originates from the desire to possess the other as one's property, and one that springs from being deprived of sexuality and/or affection.³⁵⁰ The first type of jealousy is a prejudice that the individualist needs to discard. Jealousy of the second type can be overcome if opportunities for sensuality and care are plentiful. Just as one does not feel hungry when there is an abundance of food, one does not feel jealous when there is an abundance of affection.³⁵¹ Thus, jealousy has no place in healthy loving human relationships. It is

³⁴⁶ Armand observed that utopian thinkers rejected proprietary love. E. Armand, *Utopistes et la question sexuelle*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁴⁷ Lacaze-Duthiers 1934, p. 15.

³⁴⁸ Armand 1930, pp. 3–4. See also E. Armand, *Jalousie sexuelle*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*; G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *Sexuelle (Morale)*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁴⁹ Armand 1930, p. 4.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Armand had high hopes for his free love association. He came to believe that *camaraderie amoureuse* was the only way in which anti-authoritarian relationships could truly be implemented in society. He even claimed that it could form the basis for all social relations worldwide and that it would lead to the abolition of social classes and national borders.⁴¹³ In reality, however, *camaraderie amoureuse* was largely unsuccessful. Members of Armand's collectives were disseminated all over the world, thus making physical meetings extremely rare. The number of women remained small and could be literally be counted on the fingers of one hand.⁴¹⁴ The *camaraderie amoureuse* was by and large binary, heteronormative, and even androcentric (if not plainly patriarchal). For example, Armand maintained that younger women could be attracted to older men, and older men to younger women, but never considered the reverse.⁴¹⁵ Similarly, he laid great emphasis on the religious and moral biases to which women were still prone, but understated the systemic and enduring domination of men over women.⁴¹⁶ Finally, seeking to keep control over the workings of his associations, Armand imposed harsh rules upon their members, thereby precluding the relational spontaneity and creativity that free love was meant to offer.

The *milieux libres* provided a better opportunity for individualists to explore alternative forms of relationships and sexuality.⁴¹⁷ As early as in 1905 Armand asserted that libertarian colonies were the perfect environment for the practice

⁴¹³ E. Armand, *Sexualisme*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

⁴¹⁴ From 1928 only women or a man and a woman together could join the *Compagnons de l'en dehors*, Armand's main attempt at establishing an association of *camaraderie amoureuse*. E. Armand, *L'En dehors*, janvier 1928. There was only one female member of the association in 1931. Les *compagnons de l'en dehors*, *Liste des membres du 15 septembre 1931*, p. 1.

⁴¹⁵ Armand *l'en dehors*, n. 77–79, avril 1926 ; 1934, p. 18.

⁴¹⁶ E. Armand, *Amour, Amour en Liberté, Camaraderie amoureuse*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. H. Zisly, *l'Unique*, n. 32, juillet-août 1948.

Camaraderie amoureuse was supposed to radically transform one's experience of love. Love would cease to be a blinding force, let alone the meaning of life. Instead, like William Godwin, Armand believed that love was to be grounded in friendship.⁴⁰⁶ *Eros* should be subsumed under *philia*: 'L'amour perdra graduellement son caractère passionnel pour devenir simple manifestation de camaraderie.'⁴⁰⁷ Camaraderie, for Armand, should be based on goodwill (*bonté*).⁴⁰⁸ Goodwill is the compassionate consideration of a comrade's desires, aspirations, and states of mind. It requires the cultivation of attention, care, and lucidity. *Camaraderie amoureuse* is therefore much more than a selfcentred, rational contract; it is a care ethic of companionship.

The individualist welcomes the impermanence of human relationships as they appreciate the ineluctable vagaries of existence: 'Nous considérons la vie comme une expérience et nous aimons l'expérience pour l'expérience'.⁴⁰⁹ Love, then, becomes an enriching aspect of life among many others: 'Nous concevons l'amour comme une expérience de la vie individualiste et sa pratique comme un aspect de la camaraderie qui nous rattache les uns aux autres'.⁴¹⁰ As a result, separations should no longer be experienced as failures, let alone tragedies: 'les ruptures perdraient leur caractère brusque, tranche, blessant'.⁴¹¹ If one enters into a relationship as a comrade, it is also as a comrade that one puts an end to it, namely 'sans aigreur, sans âpreté, avec douceur'.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁶ W. Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, London, G. & J. Robinson, 1793.

⁴⁰⁷ Armand 1930, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁸ E. Armand, Camaraderie, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

⁴⁰⁹ Armand 1934, p. 40.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

⁴¹¹ E. Armand, Amour, Amour en Liberté, Camaraderie amoureuse, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

⁴¹² Ibid.

rather the result of pernicious conceptions of love that should be abandoned. The individualist seeks to rid themselves of all jealous impulses.

Sexuality is a natural bodily function and need akin to nutrition and respiration.³⁵² Sexual stimulation is no different from artistic, nutritive, or scientific stimulation. Sexual desire should not be the object of shame or prudishness just as there is nothing obscene, let alone vicious or morally reprehensible about nudity.³⁵³ Investigating what one finds most sexually pleasurable is like exploring which diet is best suited to one's constitution. Libido should be placed on a par with other physical needs and desires: 'Le fait érotique ne peut pas occuper une place à part, supérieure par rapport à la satisfaction des autres nécessités de l'organisme corporel ni aux autres recherches du plaisir'.³⁵⁴ Sexuality is simply one aspect of our lives as embodied human animals.

Free love begins with the realization that one can change the ways in which one demonstrates and experiences intimacy. Love is not something mystical, transcendent, or 'extraphysiological' that cannot be subject to critical scrutiny.³⁵⁵ Sex is not sacred, and the body is not a work of art.³⁵⁶

³⁵² E. Armand, *Amour Libre et Liberté Sexuelle*, Paris, Éd. du Groupe de Propagande par la Brochure, 1935, p. 29. See also, G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Philosophie de la préhistoire, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*; E. Armand, ce que nous entendons par « liberté de l'amour », *Supplément à « l'en dehors »*, mi-juin 1934, p. 2.

³⁵³ Armand 1935, pp. 23–6.

³⁵⁴ E. Armand, Utopistes et la question sexuelle, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁵⁵ E. Armand, Amour, Amour en liberté, Camaraderie amoureuse, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁵⁶ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Sexuelle (Morale), *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

Rather, human relationships, sensuality, and sexuality are social constructions. As such, they can be examined and analysed: ‘Je prétends ... que l’amour est un sentiment parfaitement analysable ; qu’il cesse d’être spontané, capricieux et irrésistible dans la mesure où il est *éduqué*.³⁵⁷ Like any human faculty, such as taste or memory, one’s sensitivities can be modified and refined:³⁵⁸ ‘Le sentiment est un des produits physico-chimiques de l’organisme humain, comme la mémoire, le raisonnement, le jugement, l’aperception, etc... Il est éduicable et modifiable comme les autres produits de l’organisme humain.’³⁵⁹ Individualists deplored the lack of education and information available on such vital yet understudied subjects as love and sexuality:

Pourquoi n’y a-t-il pas des cours de volupté amoureuse ... où seraient enseignées toutes les combinaisons auxquelles la pratique des relations amoureuses peut donner lieu ? ... Vous avez des livres dans votre bibliothèque qui embrassent presque toutes les branches de l’activité humaine ...Mais il n’y a pas sur vos rayons un seul ouvrage consacré à la volupté.³⁶⁰

Sexology should be part of any good education.³⁶¹
It enables one to adopt a critical stance towards

³⁵⁷ Armand 1934, p. 21.

³⁵⁸ E. Armand, *La camaraderie amoureuse*, Paris, Éd. de l’en dehors, 1929, p. 10.

³⁵⁹ Armand 1934, p. 3.

³⁶⁰ Armand 1935, p. 26.

³⁶¹ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Sexuelle (Morale), *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

near anathema in the social order of the day. It is thus partly through private associations that individualists sought to put into practice their radical conceptions of free love.

Central to all of Armand’s associations that focused on erotico-sentimental relationships was the concept of *camaraderie amoureuse*.³⁹⁸ Armand described it as ‘l’intégration, dans la camaraderie, des diverses sortes de réalisations sentimentalo-sexuelles’.³⁹⁹ It is worth pointing out that attraction to a person’s intellect, character, or personality was just as important as erotic desire.⁴⁰⁰ As a matter of fact, Armand maintained that *camaraderie amoureuse* should not merely spring from physical attraction, for it is all too often the product of social biases regarding conventional standards of beauty and sex appeal.⁴⁰¹ *Camarderie amoureuse* is based on three main conditions: ideological affinity, mutual growth, and reciprocal pleasure.⁴⁰² All members are to treat each other equally and as they would like to be treated.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, *camaraderie amoureuse* is intended to be an explicit, detailed, and cancellable contract between individualists.⁴⁰⁴ Armand thought that total transparency could prevent or mitigate unnecessary suffering.⁴⁰⁵ Unfulfilled expectations and consent breaches could be avoided with clear mutual agreements.

³⁹⁸ In 1926 Armand also founded an organization against jealousy, namely the *Association internationale de combat contre la jalousie sexuelle et l’exclusivisme en amour*.

³⁹⁹ Armand 1929, pp. 11–2.

⁴⁰⁰ E. Armand, *Amour, Amour en liberté, Camaraderie amoureuse, Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

⁴⁰¹ E. Armand, *l’en dehors*, n. 155, mars 1929; n. 318–19, juin 1938.

⁴⁰² E. Armand, *Camarderie, Encyclopédie anarchiste ; l’en dehors*, n. 194–195, 15 novembre 1930 ; 1924, p. 5.

⁴⁰³ Armand wanted to act as a facilitator and as a judge whenever conflict arose between two “*camarades amoureux*”. See E. Armand, *l’en dehors*, n. 262, septembre 1933.

⁴⁰⁴ E. Armand, *l’en dehors*, n. 136, juin 1928.

⁴⁰⁵ Armand 1910, p. 5.

faire jaillir des profondeurs du moi des aspects nouveaux de la personnalité, aspects qui seraient à jamais demeurés ensevelis et stériles sans cette occasion.³⁹⁵

Second, the potential of having several partners means that one does not depend upon a single individual to satisfy one's every emotional and sexual need. Hence, a partner's company is sought not because they are the only repository of affection, but because of that which one enjoys sharing with them. In other words, non-monogamy allows people to treat each other as unique individuals rather than romantic companions by default. Polyamory is therefore the type of relationship that Armand believed best corresponded to the individualist anarchist way of life. He came up with a specific vision of how non-monogamy should be practiced in individualist circles.

Camaraderie Amoureuse

The rigidity of early twentieth-century French society prompted individualists to form voluntary associations that would allow for libertarian experimentation. As Armand stated: 'il fallait que les individus conscients se cherchent et s'associent dans le but de résister aux contraintes du milieu'.³⁹⁶ Associations offered a locale in which individualists could gather freely as anarchists: 'Nos associations individualistes sont des milieux dont les composants ont décidé entre eux de se procurer la plus grande somme de joies et de jouissances compatibles avec la notion anarchiste de la vie'.³⁹⁷ Individualists' beliefs that love should not be subject to any kind of legal regulation and that people could share intimacy regardless of their social class, gender identity, or marital status were

³⁹⁵ E. Armand, Monoandrie monogamie le couple, *Supplément à l'en dehors*, janvier 1931.

³⁹⁶ Armand 1934, p. 8.

³⁹⁷ E. Armand, L'ABC de « nos » revendications individualistes anarchistes, *Supplément à l'en dehors*, 1924, p. 5.

one's sexual behaviour, and is a crucial means of prevention against sexually transmitted infections. In short, for the individualist, one's emancipation in affairs of love and sexuality is proportional to one's degree of deconstructed appreciation of intimacy.

Free love entails equality. Religious and bourgeois morality sustain patriarchy. Individualists understood that the oppression of men over women was deeply rooted in the collective consciousness:

On ne saurait nier que le préjugé d'une morale différente pour chaque sexe ne soit profondément enraciné dans le subconscient de tous les hommes ... lesquels se considèrent comme des êtres supérieurs, propriétaires, que dis-je, maîtres absolus des individualités féminines.³⁶²

Women, they noted, are oppressed in myriad ways, such as rape within marriage, crimes of passion, unwanted pregnancy, or simply denying them pleasure: 'La femme ici est sacrifiée: l'homme a tous les droits, la femme n'en a aucun, L'égoïsme du mâle se permet toutes les fantaisies mais n'admet pas la réciprocité de la part de sa compagne'.³⁶³ Birth control should be available to all women, so that they are able to independently choose whether to have a child without having

³⁶² M. Lacerda de Moura, *L'en dehors*, 15 août 1932. Cited in E. Armand, *L'émancipation sexuelle, l'amour en camaraderie et les mouvements d'avant-garde*, Paris, Ed. de l'en dehors, 1934, p. 9. See also E. Armand, *La Révolution sexuelle et la camaraderie amoureuse*, Paris, Critique et raison, 1934, p. 64.

³⁶³ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, Sexuelle (Morale), *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

to be chaste. Individualists condemned the androcentric and hence fundamentally unequal nature of conventional romantic relationships. Free love is idle if patriarchal undercurrents remain.

Madeleine Vernet published one of the few anarchist brochures on free love written by a woman.³⁶⁴ She held that men and women should be equally free when it comes to matters of love and sexuality: ‘la liberté absolue en amour, aussi bien pour la femme que pour l’homme, n’est qu’élémentaire justice’.³⁶⁵ She criticized the depiction of women as asexual beings and the view that sexuality was an exclusively male trait. Indeed, she maintained that women have a sexuality of their own and that failing to satisfy their individual sensual needs and desires is an impediment to their full development. Virginity and chastity, on her view, are a source of tension and anxiety. Finally, she rejected monogamy since she believed that desire is naturally manifold. Armand also thought that unwanted chastity or sexual loneliness is unnatural and detrimental to one’s overall well-being.³⁶⁶ Conversely, refining one’s erotico-sentimental sensitivity enriches one’s life.³⁶⁷ He thus urged people to instigate a sexual revolution.

³⁶⁴ Madeleine Vernet was born in Houlme, near Rouen, in 1878. In 1904 she moved to Paris where she became acquainted with the anarchist milieu. She contributed to various libertarian journals, including *l’anarchie*, *Le Libéraire* and *Les Temps Nouveaux*. In 1906 she founded an orphanage called *L’Avenir social*. She was a fervent pacifist from the Great War until her death in 1949. She wrote the entries *Mère*, *Orphelinat*, *La Paix par l’éducation* in Faure’s *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁶⁵ M. Vernet, *L’amour libre*, Paris, Éd. de l’anarchie, 1907.

³⁶⁶ Armand 1919, pp. 3–4.

³⁶⁷ Armand 1929, p. 12.

Armand, life-long monogamy is unnatural and, as we shall see, scarcely compatible with libertarian camaraderie.³⁸⁹ As the anarcho-individualist Émilie Lamotte³⁹⁰ noted: ‘Tout le monde est inconstant. La fidélité n’est pas dans la nature.’³⁹¹ In fact, Armand observed that sexual promiscuity tended to be more prevalent in societies in which archism was absent or weak.³⁹² He put forth two main arguments in favour of polyamory. First, having multiple relationships usually implies richer and more intense experiences that enable one to gain greater self-knowledge.³⁹³ It is only as a result of having explored various kinds of desire and different relationship configurations that one can come to discover one’s own erotico-sentimental preferences: ‘Nous pensons que c’est a posteriori et non a priori, selon expérience, comparaison, examen personnel, que l’individualiste doit se décider pour une forme de vie sexuelle plutôt que pour une autre.’³⁹⁴ Armand thus concluded that non-monogamy and the wealth of experiences it entails is an opportunity for personal growth:

La monogamie [implique] *abstention, restriction, refoulement, résignation*. Que ce soit du point de vue intellectuel, éthique, sentimentalo-sexuel, la fréquentation simultanée de plusieurs individualités ne peut que profiter à l’ego ... La connaissance intime de plusieurs autrui peut

³⁸⁹ Armand 1927, p. 11.

³⁹⁰ Émilie Lamotte first worked as a teacher in a religious congregation. She was also a painter. She wrote in various anarchist journals, including *Le Libéraire*, *l’anarchie*, *L’Idée libre*, and *hors du troupeau*, and was an esteemed public speaker, addressing such themes as education, contraception, and free love. With her partner Lorulot, she co-founded a libertarian colony in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1906–1908), where she taught six children. She died from illness, age 32, during a tour of conferences with Lorulot.

³⁹¹ E. Lamotte, *hors du troupeau*, novembre-décembre 1911.

³⁹² Armand 1934, p. 39.

³⁹³ Armand 1927, p. 14.

³⁹⁴ Armand 1934, p. 78.

ists are as much sexual deviants as they are political dissidents: 'Les perversités sexuelles sont à l'amour ce que l'anarchie est au conformisme bourgeois.'³⁸²

Free love does not necessarily imply having multiple sexual partners or rejecting monogamy.³⁸³ Polyamory (*l'amour plural*) is, in principle, no better than monogamy: 'L'amour connaît des sédentaires et des voyageurs' wrote the individualist philosopher and novelist Han Ryner.³⁸⁴ Monogamy is perfectly acceptable so long as one does not uncritically embrace it as a result of social conditioning and educational atavism.³⁸⁵ In fact, no relationship type is superior to another. All kinds of relationship are welcome on the condition that they are consensual: 'L'essentiel est que dans les relations intimes entre anarchistes de sexe différent n'intervienne ni violence ni contrainte',³⁸⁶ Each individual is to choose according to their present inclinations: 'Il appartient à chacun – homme ou femme – de déterminer *pour soi-même* sa vie sexuelle, comme l'y incitent sa nature, les conclusions où ses expériences amoureuses l'on amené, son appréciation personnelle de la vie.'³⁸⁷ At bottom, what matters is one's individual temperament, personal preferences, honest intentions, and the quality of awareness with which one invests one's relationships.

Despite polyamory being in theory no better than monogamy, Armand condemned monogamous relationships for they often require self-sacrifice and hence pose an obstacle to the full expression of one's individuality.³⁸⁸ Ultimately, for

³⁸² M. Goldberg, cited in Armand, *Sexualisme*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁸³ Armand 1935, p. 13; 1934, p. 62.

³⁸⁴ H. Ryner, *Les Pacifiques*, Paris, E. Figuière, 1914.

³⁸⁵ Armand 1910, p. 4 ; *La camaraderie amoureuse*, Paris, Éd. de l'en dehors, p. 10.

³⁸⁶ E. Armand, *Petit manuel anarchiste individualiste*, Paris, 1911, p. 10.

³⁸⁷ E. Armand, *L'amour libre*, *Publications périodiques de la « Question Sociale »*, n. 11, 1999 [1925], p. 9.

³⁸⁸ Armand 1927, p. 11; 1934, p. 5.

Sexual Revolutionism

In opposition to 'l'amour-escalve' of bourgeois and religious morality, individualists advocated 'l'amour-libre'.³⁶⁸ Armand defined the individualist understanding of free love as follows:

Les individualistes entendent par « amour libre » la faculté, pour chaque être humain, de se déterminer individuellement, au point de vue sentimental, sexuel, génital, érotique selon que sa nature l'y incite, sans imposer à qui que ce soit son déterminisme personnel.³⁶⁹

Similarly, Vernet argued that love should not be subject to the law, social conventions, or gender differences:³⁷⁰

– L'amour doit être intégralement libre ; aucune loi, aucune morale ne doit le régir ni l'assujettir en un sens quelconque ;

– Nulle différence ne doit être faire entre les sexes en ce qui concerne l'amour ;

– Enfin, les rapports sexuels ne doivent créer entre les individus ni obligations, ni devoirs, ni droits.³⁷¹

Additionally, she claimed that people should be free to act upon mutual sexual desire.

Deux êtres s'aiment, se désirent, se le disent ; ils doivent avoir le droit de se donner l'un à l'autre sans que nulle raison étrangère à leur désir

³⁶⁸ G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, *Sexuelle (Morale)*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*.

³⁶⁹ Armand 1934, p. 2. See also Armand 1935, p. 11.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2.

³⁷¹ Vernet 1907.

n'intervienne entre eux ; comme ils doivent avoir le droit absolu de se quitter le jour où ils ne se désirent plus.³⁷²

The sexually liberated person should be able to discuss, express, and explore their sexuality unashamedly.³⁷³ They should feel neither embarrassment nor repulsion when addressing questions of sexuality:

Je considère comme sexuellement émancipé tout femme, tout homme qui peut traiter ou entendre traiter du sexualisme ... sans se sentir *repris* en lui-même, sans en éprouver aucune *répulsion* ... Qui ne peut considérer les choses relatives au sexe, le désir érotique, son propre désir de caresses orthodoxes ou hétérodoxes sans y apercevoir quelque chose de malpropre ou de répugnant n'est pas libéré, n'a pas accompli sa révolution intérieure, n'est pas affranchi. C'est encore un esclave.³⁷⁴

There is nothing inherently perverse or impure about the diverse manifestations of sexuality. In and of themselves, sexual matters are amoral.³⁷⁵

Je suis contre tous les tabous sexuels. Je suis pour toutes les libérations. Je ne m'effraye d'aucune combinaison d'ordre sentimental ou érotique, estimant que chaque individu a le droit de disposer de son corps comme il lui plaît et de se livrer à certaines expériences.³⁷⁶

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Armand 1934, p. 80.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 43, 44.

³⁷⁵ E. Armand, *l'en dehors*, n. 79–80 mai 1926.

³⁷⁶ Lacaze-Duthiers 1934, p. 15.

Individualists respected, welcomed, and even celebrated sexual deviances. At a time when “sodomy” was a crime for which one could be sentenced to several years of hard labour in England and up to 20 years of imprisonment in the USA, anarcho-individualists such as Armand and de LacazeDuthiers defended homosexuality: ‘L’attitude des individualistes anarchistes à l’égard de l’homosexualité est dénuée de préjugés, de parti pris’.³⁷⁷ Armand also saw nothing wrong with preadolescents exploring their sexuality together.³⁷⁸ Similarly, he claimed that there was nothing morally reprehensible about transsexuality, masturbation (*onanisme*), or even incest.³⁷⁹ Finally, he spoke favourably of sexual fetishism and paraphilias as long as they were consensual: ‘Il est dans le rôle des individualistes anarchistes de proclamer, de défendre le droit du fantaisiste sexuel (dès lors, je le répète, qu’il n’entend user ni de violence, ni de contrainte) à s’associer à autrui’.³⁸⁰ Preventing oneself from engaging in paraphilic practices is tantamount to restricting one’s freedom of expression. In fact, for the individualist, sexual originality is to be encouraged, just like creativity in other dimensions of life: ‘Je revendique pour n’importe laquelle des formes de l’activité sexuelle de la vie amoureuse, pleine liberté, pleine possibilité d’exposition, de prostitution, d’expérimentation’.³⁸¹ In a nutshell, individual-

³⁷⁷ E. Armand, *Inversion sexuelle*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*. Note that, for many years, Armand still referred to homosexuality in medical terms as a deviance. He seemed to have fully embraced non-heterosexual unions sometime in the 1930s. Armand, *L’homosexualité, l’onanisme et les individualistes*, Paris, Éd. de l’en dehors, 1931. See also E. Armand, *Notre individualisme*, Orléans, Éd. de l’en dehors, 1937, p. 7; *L’Unique*, n. 11, juin 1946.

³⁷⁸ E. Armand, *l’anarchie*, novembre 1905.

³⁷⁹ Armand 1931, pp. 22–9; 1935, p. 13.

³⁸⁰ E. Armand, *Symbolisme (fétichisme ou fantaisisme) sexuel*, *Encyclopédie anarchiste*. Armand provides numerous examples of paraphilias: e.g. partialism (podophilia, mazophilia, trichophilia, etc.), urolagnia, coprophilia, exhibitionism, zoophilia, kleptophilia, acrotomophilia, transvestic fetishism, agalmatophilia, necrophilia.

³⁸¹ E. Armand, *Subversismes sexuels*, Paris, Éd. de l’en dehors, 1927, p. 3.

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of thought, group of theoreticians, or set of tactics. Younger generations of anarchists are wary of all forms of ideology and doctrine.

This account is partial and fragmentary, for it eclipses more traditional forms of anarchist ideology and political engagement that continue to exist albeit as the new minority. Who are the new mainstream anarchists? Contemporary expressions of anarchism are located within a wide-ranging web of social movements. A broad distinction can be made between libertarians who explicitly identify with anarchism *qua* socio-political tradition and those who implicitly embrace anarchist values and strategies. Scholars have given this divide many names such as ‘capital-A anarchists’ and ‘non-a anarchists’.⁵ The former group is composed of individuals who form anarchist collectives, federations, and organizations. They identify with the movement’s history and its proximity to the class-struggle. The latter group does not (usually) self-identify as anarchist. When its members do not reject all identifiers, they adopt labels such as autonomist, antiauthoritarian, and libertarian socialist. Remaining independent from left-wing political parties, this groups is composed of individuals who campaign for specific causes such as antifascism, antiracism, intersectional feminism, animal rights, and ecology. It also

⁵ For Kinna, non-a anarchists are ‘those who might have radical libertarian sensibilities, but do not identify with anarchism’. R. Kinna, *Where to Now?/Loose Ends, The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, London, Bloomsbury, 2012, p. 317. Newman (2011, p. 176) talks about an ‘unconscious anarchism’. Ibañez (2014, p. 23) refers to ‘l’anarchisme extramuros’; *Nouveaux fragments épars pour un anarchisme sans dogmes*, Paris, rue des cascades, 2017, pp. 24–7. Williams contrasts explicit and implicit anarchists. D. M. Williams, *Contemporary anarchist and anarchistic movements, Sociology Compass*, 12, 2018. Dupuis-Déri (2018, pp. 14–6) makes a tripartite distinction between ‘l’anarchisme politique’ (those who belong to anarchist organizations and identify as anarchists), ‘l’anarchisme social’ (those who do not belong to specifically anarchist organization and do not necessarily identify as anarchists), and ‘l’anarchisme autonome’ (those who do not belong to any socio-political organization but advocate anarchist principles).

includes militants from anti-war, antinuclear, queer, and squatter movements as well as several other subcultures of resistance and radical social change.⁶

Simon Luck conducted the most extensive sociological study of libertarians in contemporary France. His findings illustrate and expound the above-mentioned divide, and confirm prior sociological studies.⁷ Arguing that that anti-authoritarianism is too broad a definition of anarchism and following other commentators, Luck divides the board libertarian movement into two 'relatively homogenous' groups, namely "anarchists" and "radicals of the alternative and far left".⁸ He holds that, despite their shared belief in individual freedom and equality, the differences between these two groups are important enough for them to be considered distinct political milieux:

Celle des radicaux est fondée avant tout sur le principe de l'autonomie des individus face à toute contrainte structurelle, collective et identitaire. La culture anarchiste repose quant à elle sur une longue histoire ; elle s'inscrit dans la filiation du mouvement ouvrier socialiste dont elle conserve une part importante de références.⁹

Luck based most of his research upon interviews conducted with 83 individuals.¹⁰ Though this number is relatively small,

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on implicit anarchists, see D. M. Williams, Contemporary anarchist and anarchistic movements, *Sociology Compass*, vol. 12, 2018.

⁷ E.g. R. Creagh, L'anarchisme en mutation, A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire. Actes du colloque international, Grenoble, mars 1996*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, pp. 25–39; Pucciarelli 1997, pp. 398–430.

⁸ Luck 2008, pp. 510, 42–3, 92.

⁹ Ibid, p. 596.

¹⁰ The anarchists interviewed were members of the *Fédération anarchiste (FA)* and *Alternative libertaire (AL)*, which are the two main anarchist

comparison with other studies confirms the cogency of the statistical data collected.¹¹ His findings show that Paris remains the French city with the largest number of libertarians.¹² Interviewees were generally young, educated, belonged to the salaried middle classes, and often came from families oriented on the left end of the political spectrum. Their average age was 33 and more than half of them were between the ages of 26 and 35.¹³ Only a quarter of them were women.¹⁴ Their level of education was higher than that of the general population.¹⁵ Most had received little to no religious education.¹⁶ Let us now sketch out the main cultural, theoretical, and strategic differences between the two groups of libertarians.

organisations in France. The former defends a strict anti-authoritarian position whereas the latter advocates anarcho-communism sometimes bearing rebalances to the Revolutionary Communist League. It is worth noting that formal membership of anarchist organizations has stagnated for the past few decades. The post-War anarchist movement never exceeded 1,000 official members, which is significantly fewer than the first wave of anarchism (1880–1914) with numbers oscillating between 2,000 and 5,000. In 2007 there were 300 members of the *FA* and 200 of *AL*. The *FA* publishes a weekly newspaper since 1954 called *Le Monde Libertaire*. It had 1200 subscribers in 2006–2007 and about 1000 copies were sold in newspaper kiosks (Luck 2008, p. 318). A little over a decade later, in 2018, the number of members of *AL* has grown to 300. These figures have not changed much since the 1970s. In 1971, there were between 200 and 300 members of the *FA* and about 600 anarchist militants across all anarchist organizations. In 1996 there were 500 members of the *FA*, 130 members of *AL*, and 750 across all anarchist organizations. However, it is important to bear in mind that there has always been a much greater number of people who sympathize with anarchism. Obviously, this number is even more difficult to estimate. See Pucciarelli 1997, p. 400.

¹¹ Luck 2008, p. 95.

¹² Ibid, p. 167.

¹³ Ibid, p. 76–7.

¹⁴ Luck 2008 p. 77, 341–2, 584. The number of women is even lower when it comes to membership of and participation in anarchist organisations. Like in other activist circles, male domination endures.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 77.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 81–2. Libertarians were critical of religion or simply indifferent to it. Only one individual identified as a person of faith.

Anarchists' political engagement is rooted in a specific history and culture. The anarchist identity is made up of inherited core values and theoretical corpora, symbols and myths, songs and iconography, martyrs and heroes, literary works and journals, as well as a particular sense of camaraderie and forms of association. It is, in short, everything that makes up the lives, memories, and visions of those who come together as self-identified anarchists. Preserving and passing down this identity to new generations is considered crucial to keeping the movement alive in the long term. That said, most anarchists welcome the circulation and expansion of libertarian ideas and practices in other radical circles.¹⁷ Anarchists' activity tends to resemble that of other political parties, such as going on strike, leafletting, and propaganda. Despite a relatively small number of working-class anarchists today (less than 25%),¹⁸ references to the working class still permeates the ethos of the *Fédération anarchiste*.¹⁹ Anarchists cultivate a sense of fascination for the heyday of the movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Revolutionary discourse, the black flag, songs dating back to the nineteenth century, and the use of the term "compagnon" are instances of the cultural elements that constitute this collective consciousness and memory. Anarchists are

¹⁷ Communauté de Travail du CIRA, *Société et contre-société*, Genève, CIRA, 1974, p. 138.

¹⁸ About a quarter of anarchists in Luck's study were workers and almost half came from a working-class family. Only 16% of radicals had a working-class father and none were themselves from the working class. Luck 2008, pp. 102, 546. This trend was already perceptible in the mid-1960s. See M. Pucciarelli, L'anarchisme, une denrée pour les classes cultivées ? Les libertaires aujourd'hui, A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire. Actes du colloque international, Grenoble, mars 1996*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, p. 405.

¹⁹ Luck 2008, pp. 534–9.

Varias, A. (1997), *Paris and the Anarchists: Aesthetes and Subversives During the Fin de Siècle* (London: Macmillan).

Verdier, M. (2018), 'La perspective de l'autonomie', (Paris 10).

Vincent, A. (2009), *Modern Political Ideologies* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Vodovnik, Z. (2013), *A Living Spirit of Revolt* (Dexter, Michigan: PM Press).

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– (1978 [1922]), *Economy and Society*, trans. E. Fischoff (Berkeley University of California Press).

Williams, D. M. (2018), 'Contemporary anarchist and anarchistic movements', *Sociology Compass*, 12.

Woodcock, G. (1995), *The Anarchist Reader* (Glasgow: Fontana).

Zerzan, J. (2002), *Running on Emptiness* (Los Angeles: Federal House).

those upholding a specific cultural heritage, which shapes the *rêverie libertaire*.²⁰

By contrast, the politics of radicals of the far left is centred upon the individual and their absolute freedom.²¹ On their view, individual autonomy is to be the organizing principle of society:²² '[Les militant.e.s de la gauche radicale et alternative] mettent en avant la primauté de l'individu et de ses aspirations face aux déterminations extérieures'²³ ; '[ils.elles pla-cent] l'autonomie individuelle avant la cohésion du collectif'.²⁴ Political activism is regarded first and foremost as means of self-affirmation and self-expression;²⁵ it should be grounded in individual flourishing and personal fulfilment rather than self-sacrifice.²⁶ As for their social background, radicals differ from anarchists in that they tend to belong to higher social classes, which comes as no surprise since a privileged upbringing leads one to attach less importance to material needs and more to self-expression. Radicals are also generally younger, better educated,²⁷ and represented by more women than the other group of libertarians.²⁸ They seek to distance themselves from traditional modes of political engagement and deploy eclectic and

²⁰ A. Pessin, Problématique de la culture libertaire, A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire. Actes du colloque international, Grenoble, mars 1996*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997.

²¹ Luck 2008, pp. 510, 514.

²² Ibid, p. 573.

²³ Ibid, p. 45. See also p. 161, 511.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 514.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 514. This is a higher percentage than most other sociological studies. It shows the growing presence of women in anarchist circles.

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 514, 633, 635.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 93–4, 546. 93% of radicals interviewed were below the age of 35 compared to 49% for anarchists. The average number of years spent in higher education is 4.4 for radicals and 2.5 for anarchists. Almost half of the anarchist interviewed did not attend university, whereas 95% had a university degree.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 95, 582. 40% of radicals were women compared to 25% for anarchists.

innovative strategies and modes of action.²⁹ They do not rally around a shared historical identity or a common theoretical frame of reference. They have little interest in the anarchist past, and hardly ever refer to theoreticians such as Proudhon or Bakunin. Rather, they are suspicious of all political theories, ideologies, and doctrines, which they often reject as dogmatic or messianic.³⁰ They challenge the anarchist culture itself. In fact, to them, any culture is arguably authoritarian insofar as it comprises a set of externally imposed conventions that everyone is expected to follow. As such, it breeds conformity and blind obedience. For radicals, an anarchist culture is thus a contradiction in terms. Their activism is not integration into a specific culture, let alone a political tradition, but rather a means to express and develop their individuality. They campaign for autonomy, plurality, and difference. It is very the absence of ideological boundaries that allows for the autonomy of each individual: if there is no orthodoxy, there can be no heresy.³¹

In summation, anarchists and radicals clearly have distinct identities. They differ from one another with regards to their view of history, theory, and practice. They come from different social backgrounds and adopt different modes of action. Radicals advocate gradual social transformation by modifying their everyday lives whilst anarchists focus on the struggle against institutions, especially those that represent the State and capitalism. Anarchists' political philosophy revolves around a doctrinal corpus whereas radicals wish to distance themselves from an anarchist culture that they view as overly

²⁹ Ibid, p 512.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 519. Many authors highlight the rejection of all political ideology by new generations of militant of the radical left. See T. Ibañez, *Installé entre le provisoire et le changement comme la vie elle-même*, *IRL*, Summer 2002, p. 22. 867 T. Ibañez, *La culture libertaire ? Non merci !*, A. Pessin & M. Pucciarelli (eds.), *La culture libertaire. Actes du colloque international, Grenoble, mars 1996*, Lyon, Atelier de création libertaire, 1997, pp. 19–23.

³¹ Ibid, p. 523.

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Ramonet, T. (2017), 'Aujourd'hui l'anarchisme a tendance à ne plus dire son nom', interview with Ramonet by Mathieu Dejean 13 January 2017, lanarchisme-a-tendance-a-ne-plus-dire-nom-144354-31-01-2017/.

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rigid and outdated. Anarchists and radicals are critical of one another. The former are seen as violent, sectarian and the latter as naïve and inefficient.³² Anarchists view radicals as anti-globalization neo-petit-bourgeois intellectuals who are not truly challenging the capitalist system.

Social scientists and various other commentators have rightly pointed out the broad division of contemporary anarchism into two main groups, namely anarchists proper and radicals of the far left. This, however, is not a new phenomenon. It should be clear by now that there has always been such a division *within anarchism*, which is primarily grounded in the ongoing tension between individualism and collectivism. As Luck writes:

On a, d'un côté, des formes d'action collective individualisée, c'est-à-dire de pratiques individuelles dont l'agrégation est supposée conduire peu à peu au changement social, et, de l'autre, une volonté d'agir collectivement sur les institutions afin de modifier en retour les situations individuelles.³³

This historically uninformed account is due to scholars' lack of knowledge of individualist stands of anarchism. Luck seems to be almost entirely unaware of the French anarcho-individualist tradition. He only explicitly mentions individualism once in 700 pages, not citing any classical French individualists, but merely quoting Stirner as the leading figure of the movement. Ibañez appears to be better aware of the importance of the tradition, but only acknowledges twice in passing in his 2014 book on new forms of anarchism:

³² Ibid, p. 575. 870 Ibid, p. 579.

³³ Ibid, p. 572. See also pp. 578–9, 597. '[Les anarchistes] se veulent révolutionnaires et sont par conséquent essentiellement tournés vers le renversement des institutions et de l'ordre social. [Les radicaux] estiment au contraire que changer l'individu permettra le changement social'.

‘L’anarchisme individualiste classique, dont la diversité est bien plus importante qu’on ne le pense, a largement contribué, par ses idées, ses point de vue et ses pratique à accroître la richesse de l’anarchisme dans son ensemble’.³⁴ He remains silent on individualists’ identity as well as on the ideas and practices they advocated.

In truth, what scholars such as Ibañez call “neo-anarchism” does not describe the libertarian movement as a whole, but the current majority libertarian group, namely “radicals”. *Mutatis mutandis*, the relationship between “anarchists” and “radicals” bears resemblance to that of libertarian socialists and individualist anarchists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The key difference is that the ratio has been inverted. Those who were once on the fringes of the movement now constitute the libertarian mainstream. Whilst in the early twentieth century there were more libertarian socialists than individualist anarchists, radicals are now more numerous and influential than anarchists.³⁵ This is not a recent trend. Writing in the 1970s, Woodcock argued that instead of ‘a direct attack on the citadel of power’ anarchists now worked towards social transformation through changing ‘the attitude of people at the grassroot level’.³⁶ Thus, there has been no major paradigm shift within anarchism. Rather, the tension between individualism and collectivism and their respective modes of action have always been – and continue to be – part and parcel of the broad libertarian movement.

³⁴ Ibañez 2014, pp. 40, 92.

³⁵ There are about 1,000 individuals who are members of official anarchist federations and organizations. In 2003 Pucciarelli estimated that there were between 5,000 and 10,000 of self-identified anarchists in France. These figures do not seem to be based on statistical evidence and are likely to be an overestimation. Pucciarelli refers to ‘anarchistes sociaux’ in contrast to ‘anarchistes du quotidien, culturel et diffus’. Pucciarelli 2003, p. 129.

³⁶ G. Woodcock, *The Anarchist Reader*, Glasgow, Fontana, 1977, p. 53.

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Whilst classical individualists were critical of the majority, postanarchists seem to re-affirm what the majority is already doing. Postanarchism could be regarded as an a posteriori justification of contemporary versions of individualist anarchism. Could the postanarchist drive be a symptom of the individualistic drift of our age rather than a remedy to the predicaments we face? In a world facing far-reaching, global, and systemic challenges such as climatic downfall and the return of the far right, postanarchists may be part of the problem rather than the solution. Bookchin's 1995 critique of 'lifestyle anarchism' appears to be just as relevant today as it was 25 years ago: 'Self-styled anarchists have slowly surrendered the social core of anarchist ideas to the all-pervasive Yuppie and

New Age personalism that marks this decadent, bourgeoisified era.'³⁷

Ad hoc aventurism, personal bravura, an aversion to theory oddly akin to the antirational biases of postmodernism, celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and antiorganizational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction has taken on Euro-American anarchism.³⁸

If anything, it is the social aspect of anarchism that needs to be revived. Classical individualists criticized mainstream anarchists for focusing too much on the *Grand soir* to the detriment of changes in their own lives. Today we ought to criticize those who focus too much on themselves to the detriment of larger social changes. We do not need greater individualization,

³⁷ Bookchin 1995, p. 1.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

but greater organization. The blind quest for individual autonomy impedes the development of a political community, of a mass movement, and of libertarian institutions. Individualist anarchists in early twentieth-century France, especially those of the constructive type, came to regard the individual not as an isolated monad, but as a being enmeshed in networks of social relations and embedded in a broader ecosystem. Anarchism, specifically postanarchism, should learn from its past and move beyond individualism *sensu stricto*.

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Conclusion

Laying bare what had always been there, this thesis has brought some elucidation of the anarchist tradition, which I hope will bring intellectual satisfaction to some and pragmatic inspiration to others. Seeking to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle, I have demonstrated that some approaches within the philosophy, sociology, and history of anarchism were misguided, that some questions were not worth pursuing, and that some distinctions induced more confusion than intelligibility. In this way, I have contributed to our understanding of anarchist practice past and present as well as potential future. I hope the reader completes this work as I have, namely with a refined appreciation of anarchism as an imminent, emergent, and potent vector of social change and of anarchists as resourceful insurgents with much more than dynamite in their toolbox. Anarchists – especially those who identified as individualists – do not believe in a final eradication of coercive power and in a total liberation of the human person. Rather, the state of anarchy is to be continuously fought for, embodied, and exercised in all dimensions and levels of daily life. It is in this sense that anarchists strive to prefigure ordinary anarchy.

I began this thesis seeking to assess postanarchism. This led me to re-evaluate anarchist historiography by delving into the rich tradition of individualist anarchism – a little-known and vastly understudied strand of classical anarchism, which was most active in France between 1880 and 1914. The rehabilitation of French individualist anarchism allowed me to historically contextualize and to better appreciate the force of the postanarchist endeavour. I showed that postanarchism is not so much a revision of classical anarchism as a revival of one of its neglected dimensions. Postanarchists can be seen as the latest philosophical renewal of individualist anarchism.

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I argued that postanarchism should be careful not to fall prey to the same shortcomings as some versions of classical individualism and that it could be enriched by turning to more anthropological and sociological studies of anarchist prefiguration. My investigation of anarcho-individualism also enabled me to clarify debates regarding sociological divisions between present-day libertarians and nourished a broader reflection on anarchism as a pluralistic, heterodox, and heterogeneous movement, culture, and way of life.

Individualist anarchism reveals the vast diversity in theory and practice that was present within the libertarian movement from the very outset. That the tradition remains largely unacknowledged despite the rapid development of anarchist studies in the past twenty years reminds us of the fragility of our historical memory. This amnesia is largely due to a reductive perspective of anarchism as a political ideology put forth by a handful of great thinkers. Indeed, I have argued that it is the predominance of canonical histories of anarchism led to the exclusion of expressions of anarchism that do not directly deal with the organization of society. During the heyday of anarchism in early twentieth-century France, individualist anarchists, for whom political engagement consisted primarily in prefiguration and practices of self-transformation, were often ostracized. They thus suffered from a double marginalization: one by their contemporaries and one by historians. Analysing this demoted and neglected tradition offers a renewed appreciation of anarchism's cultural and intellectual history. Disclosing the underside of its history, individualist anarchism allows us to recover the full potential of the libertarian tradition.

It goes without saying that my historical study calls for further investigation. More could be said on individualists' positivism, neo-malthusianism, anticlericalism, feminism, antimilitarism, pacifism, spirituality, philosophical egoism, associations, pedagogical approaches, as well as on each topic and individual addressed here. These subjects strayed beyond

the scope of this thesis as one of my central aims was to respond to postanarchists' critique of classical anarchism and to their stance on contemporary political engagement. I have thus chosen to focus chiefly on aspects of individualism that shed light upon the diversity of anarchism and that anticipated poststructuralist insights. A more varied approach to source material could have been used to conduct a more sophisticated historical investigation of the tradition. Correspondence, novels, plays, poems, and non-anarchist newspapers are examples of further sources to exploit should one wish to establish a more comprehensive sociocultural framework. Delving deeper into French departmental and regional archives could also tell us more about individualists' personal lives and interconnections. This study remains predominantly text based and hence favours the literati. It would be worth analysing non-textual sources in greater depth. I trust future scholars will continue to unearth the rich history of individualist anarchism.

Anarcho-individualism was first and foremost a conscious and constant revolt against all forms of unjustified authority as they unfold in ordinary, everyday life, especially those so minute, diffuse, and habitual that they are hardly noticeable, though they pervade society and hold sway over our minds and bodies. Individualists were amongst the first to grasp the relationship between the personal, micro-political aspects of daily life and social, macro-political freedom. As zealous critics and bold experimenters, individualists shaped the anarchist tradition and influenced various other social, political, and artistic movements. Individualism evolved beside but also in disagreement with the mainstream libertarian movement at the time. A simplified chronology of individualism would say that individualists began with revolutionary aspirations then turn to artistic and personal liberation before founding communes and eventually joining the rest of the anarchist movement. I have shown that the reality was much more nuanced, and that individualists made use of multiple and often overlapping strate-

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gies. Moving away from prevailing ideological, theoretical, or canonical approaches, I sought gain a greater understanding individualism through modes of action. To this end, I identified three individualist ideal types, namely insurrectionist, egoist, and constructivist, and their respective strategies, namely opposition (agonism), subjectification (autopoiesis), and construction (heterotopia). These distinct yet complementary modes of individualist struggle are different ways of practicing freedom to which one may have recourse in relation to the right person, at the right time, to the right extent, in the right manner, and for the right purpose. They thus constitute the groundwork of an individualist virtue ethic.

The insurrectionist, who symbolizes the hackneyed image of the anarchist as a terrorist, seeks to confront and eradicate all external sources of oppression, exploitation, and domination. Both the illegalist – principally thieves who sought to live outside of laws and conventions – and the insurgent – the perpetrators of the infamous *attentats* that gave anarchism its terrorist label – were by and large individualists who were condemned by libertarian socialists. The egoist seeks to emancipate themselves from all engrained authoritarian biases and to develop their personal faculties as unique and self-aware individuals. We find illustrations of the egoist type in such charismatic figures as Zo d'Axa and Libertad, the founders of the two main individualist journals of their generation. *L'Endehors* and *l'anarchie* reflected individualists' commitment to anti-dogmatism along with their celebration of eclecticism, thereby making them cultural epicentres of the fin-de-siècle and of the Belle Époque. Finally, the constructivist offers a fruitful reconsideration of the relation between the individual, the collective, social structures, as well as the broader natural environment. Constructivists were visionaries and pioneers. Many of their ideas and practices, such those on nature and love, remain relevant, thought-provoking, and compelling today. More than any other individualist ideal

type, the constructivist moved beyond the conception of the individual as an isolated monad and embraces the virtuous circle of personal, social, and ecological change working concurrently. They adopted a more holistic perspective of the human being as not only enmeshed in relations of power, but coevolving with other humans and interdependent with the more-than-human-world. Self-transformation had turned into self-transcendence.

Following early twentieth-century French individualists, anarchism should look beyond the individual. If postanarchism is the latest philosophical justification, not to say prescription of the individualist inclinations of the libertarian movement, neo-anarchism is a sociological identification and description of the predominant libertarian groups today. Both approaches mistakenly believe in some rupture between the anarchism of the present and that of the past. In truth, anarchism always has been and will always be an ever-changing movement constantly shaped and re-shaped by ongoing and context-specific struggles for both negative and positive freedom. The oscillation between the needs for inward, personal, and existential change and outward, social, and environmental change should not be seen as a dissonant political aporia, but a fertile driving force of holistic revolutions. It is what makes anarchism such a powerful and transformative social movement, political ideology, and way of life.

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