

ATUBES: January 2018

Digest of the Anarchist Tubes

ANEWS



January, 2018

Contents

- A Review of Anarchism in Korea 3
 - The question of national liberation 3
 - Transnational networks of discourse and practice 4
 - Anarchists and alliances 4
 - Anti-communism 5
 - Anarchists in government 5
 - Cold War anarchists 6
 - By way of conclusion 7
- Iran: The Working Class Raises Its Head 7
- Notes Concerning the Black Clothing Worn by Some Anarchist Men and Muslim Women 9
- Illegalist Praxis: Notes on a Decade of Crime 13

A Review of Anarchism in Korea

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/review-anarchism-korea>

Review of “Anarchism in Korea. Independence, Transnationalism, and the Question of National Development 1919-1984” by Dongyoun Hwang (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016)

By José Antonio Gutiérrez

Dongyoun Hwang has been working for many years recovering the history of Korean anarchism, a movement which has been remarkably important for the history of its own country, to the point that anarchism was even mentioned by some South Korean scholars as one of the ten more influential ideas ushering Korea into the 20th century (p.1). Notwithstanding its relevance, it has been largely overlooked by anarchists elsewhere and whose history has been inscribed in a nationalist narrative which misrepresents it. Like Nestor Makhno in Ukraine, in Korea, important anarchist historical figures such as Shin Chaeho have been appropriated in purely nationalistic terms, devoid from social and internationalist/transnational aspirations which are at the very core of their anarchist commitments. But more importantly, the understanding of the movement as inscribed within the boundaries of modern national borders, ignores its transnational genesis. The book of Hwang is an attempt to portray this movement in its own terms and to understand their positions in their own local circumstances. As all good books, it doesn't exhaust the topic, leaving many avenues to be explored by future research and many questions deserving more analysis.

The main contentions of the book are, on the one hand, that the Korean anarchist movement cannot be dissociated from other regional movements in East Asia, particularly in Japan and China. With these movements they were in constant contact, exchange and there was plenty of ideological and practical cross-fertilisation. He also contends, on the other hand, that Korean anarchism was never a monolithic and homogenous body, with important practical and ideological differences which can be explained to a great degree before of the localisation of anarchism in given contexts. Taking together these two main arguments, I feel the book would have been more aptly called “Korean Anarchisms”, instead of “Anarchism [as if singular] in Korea [as he deals extensively with Korean anarchists in China and Japan too]”.

The question of national liberation

Another important contention of the book, is that some of the political options of the Korean anarchist movement –such as their insistence in independence, the national question, their participation in a national front and eventually in the Korean Provisional Government in China- should not be condemned beforehand as deviations from an abstract universal canon, but they should be understood –however critically- in the exceptional circumstances this movement had to face as an expression of a colonised people. In a way not too different to how some national liberation movements during the second half of the 20th century came to view Marxism as a short-cut towards modernity and as a tool to achieve national independence, Korean radicals came to view anarchism as an alternative path to modernity and to national liberation, which originally was part and parcel of a process which ultimately would lead to a radical transformation of society based on anarchist principles.

Anarchism in Korea developed in the aftermath of the March 1st Movement, in 1919, which saw the first mass demonstrations in Korea against Japanese occupation of the peninsula. The yearning for national liberation of a colonised people was key to radicalise segments of society and the youth in the first half of the 20th century, and they embraced and translated anarchism in order to adapt to this circumstances. Naturally, this process was dialectical and these radicals lived in a permanent tension between their national goal and the transnational aspirations shared with other anarchists in the region. Paradoxically, Korean anarchism developed to a great degree because of the exchanges with Japanese anarchists which were made possible by colonialism –Koreans went to work and study to Japan, Japanese publications circulated and thus, Koreans became familiar with anarchist theory and ideas. Anarchism in Korea depended largely on initiatives by students returning from Japan. Among the main influences of Korean anarchists were the writings of the Japanese anarchist Osugi

Sakae and of the Russian anarchist Pyotr Kropotkin, whose evolutionary thought and ideas on mutual aid would be a most enduring legacy for Korean anarchism through its various phases, as we shall see.

Transnational networks of discourse and practice

Korean anarchism flourished through networks of discourse and practice, in which Tokyo, Osaka, Shanghai, Beijing and Quanzhou, acted as nodes of these radical transnational networks. But in these networks, discourses and practices did not travel unaltered, but were localised into the diverse realities in which anarchists had to operate. Anarchism not only was translated and adapted to the local conditions of their colonised homeland by Korean anarchists; their anarchism was also responsive to the local conditions in foreign territories where they became anarchists. There were marked differences in the local compositions of the movement, which was also consequential to discourses and practices. While in Japan the movement was mostly composed by students, who usually had to work to sustain themselves, and of some economic migrants, in China the movement was mostly composed by exiles.

But even within each country, there were important differences according to local conditions. In Japan there was a marked difference between the more ideological anarchist circles of Tokyo - a city attracting mostly Korean students, and with vibrant Japanese anarchist circles - and the more pragmatic, cooperative and labour oriented activities of Korean anarchists in Osaka - an industrial centre with a significant Korean population attracted to work in the industry as cheap labour. In China, anarchists in Shanghai and Quanzhou were engaged in educational activities together with their Chinese counterparts, while in Manchuria their main activity focused on welfare cooperatives and self-defence associations. In Korea itself, anarchists in the largely agrarian south were more ideological and given to propaganda efforts, while northern anarchists were more inclined to labour and pragmatic action for the downtrodden sectors of society, as the north was undergoing a process of intense and rapid industrialisation, hence the concern on the impacts of this process both on the urban masses and on the industrial and urban workers. To what degree the legacy of anarchists discourses on autonomy, independence, self-sufficiency in the north had an impact over the development of the Juche (self-reliance) ideology which is the trademark of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is not explored by the author, but it is one of those unexplored avenues which this research opens up.

Anarchists and alliances

As Korean anarchism was reflecting the radicalisation of segments of Korean society in the wake of the 1919 nationalist movement, the relationship to nationalism was tense and contradictory. Anarchists in Korea, in their heyday (1925-1930), almost completely failed to mention the idea of independence, emphasising the social - rather than the 'national' - aspect of the struggle. A similar trend can be seen among Japanese anarchists: whether in Tokyo or Osaka, they were very critical of nationalism, stating above everything the need to change and transform the social relationships produced by capitalism and imperialism. Although ideology was undoubtedly at play here, according to Hwang other more pragmatic reasons may also be at play, since any such pro-independence propaganda in Japan or Korea would have attracted unwanted attention from the ubiquitous surveillance and repressive apparatus of the Japanese empire. Japanese repression had a crippling effect over the movement, shattering not only the anarchists as a movement, but also physically, as soul and bodies. In China, instead, anarchists would have had far more freedom, at least for a while, during the 1920s, and the prime goal of Korean anarchists in China was, undoubtedly, national liberation and independence - except for those anarchists in Manchuria. But likewise, ideological reasons may also be at play here: in China there was a veritable nationalist effervescence which in all likelihood left its imprint in the priorities of anarchists there - while Manchuria remains some kind of hinterland with a poverty-stricken migrant population in need of pragmatic solutions to their urgent and most basic needs.

As Korean anarchists whether in Japan, Korea or China, opposed Japanese imperialism and the discrimination against and oppression of Koreans, there were marked differences also in relation to the question of working with other political currents, particularly with nationalists, socialists and the communists. While anarchists in

Japan were very critical of nationalism, rejecting that the social question should assume a secondary role, as Koreans were exposed to all sort of humiliations and discrimination in the country of the coloniser, but also because of the influence of syndicalism and “pure anarchism”, the dominant currents of Japanese anarchists. The socialist movement in Japan had a great deal of common interaction, and in places like Osaka, Korean anarchists cooperated with communists and socialists. Let us remember that some Japanese anarchists, such as founding figures like Kotoku Shusui, came from a Marxist background. Although in Tokyo, the more ideological anarchists were quite vitriolic against the communists, still they were in the same organisation in the early 1920s (splitting in 1922).

Anti-communism

In China there was a booming nationalist movement, quite anti-communist in nature, headed by the Guomindang, in which some anarchists participated, although downplaying their anarchism, under constant threat of being purged and concentrating in relatively safe havens such as Quanzhou. While fully immersed in radical circles in China, most Korean anarchists systematically opted to side with anti-communist nationalists. There may have been a number of reasons for this. The nationalist discourse would have been closer to their own longing for national liberation. They may have seen better opportunities to advance their autonomous social projects with them as opposed to a communist movement which they saw largely controlled by the Soviet Union.

Undoubtedly, the fact that Korean anarchism developed in the 1920s, when globally the anarchist movement started a long decline (which also affected the anarchist movements in China and Japan) and the communist parties, led by the Soviet revolutionary example were gaining momentum and filled the vacuum left by anarchism’s retreat, played a significant role in the hostility of many an anarchist against working with communists. This was intensified as news of the suppression of anarchists in Soviet Russia reached Korean anarchists, an experience they learned from a Russian anarchist in China, Vasily Eroshenko, who paradoxically would later in the decade return to Russia and work with Communist Party cultural initiatives. In Manchuria there was a tense alliance with nationalists and active hostility against the communist guerrillas, which lasted until the Japanese invasion of 1931.

But there were also other reasons, more practical in nature, for the Korean anarchists’ rejection of communists. In the case of anarchists in China, particularly since the bloody purge of communists led by the Guomindang after the Shanghai strike of 1927, they had to distance themselves from communists (anarchists would be labelled as “cousins” of communists by conservative nationalists) and thus downplay important aspects of the universal anarchist credo, such as its insistence in revolutionary means, class struggle, and the struggle against the State. In this process, Kropotkin’s ideas of mutual aid, of combining manual and intellectual labour, and his view of an anarchist modernity in which industrialisation would take place in harmony with the development of the countryside, offered a vision which could appeal to the nationalist aspirations of their constituency without risking exposing dangerous ‘communist’ overtones.

Anarchists in government

The Japanese progressive invasion of China since 1931, which started in Manchuria, represented a big challenge but also a big opportunity for Korean anarchists. On the one hand, they lost a safe haven they’ve had for nearly a decade, free of the Japanese repressive State, but also it turned the national liberation question into a political imperative. Whatever goals Korean anarchists had on their top priorities, none were possible under Japanese colonialism and the liberation of Korea was a necessary precondition for any of them. The military triumph of China over Japan too became then a precondition for the liberation of Korea, for the conditions to lay out the foundations of the new society. With this in mind, they started in 1936 to discuss ideas for a united national front with all sectors opposing Japanese colonialism. In 1937, the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war and the second united front between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), paved the way for Koreans to emulate this unity. If Chinese nationalists and communists could cooperate, why not Kore-

ans? Furthermore, the experience of national fronts in other countries threatened by fascism was also followed attentively by anarchists.

Anarchists became engaged in armed struggle and terror attacks directed against collaborators and Japanese military and civilian officers in the 1930s. Eventually, in 1941, after some years of a joint experience with other independence and socialist groups -the Korean communists, who were then affiliated to the CCP conspicuously absent-, prominent anarchists joined the rather conservative nationalist Korean Provisional Government in China, in the name of the unity of the anti-Japanese forces. Yu Rim, one of the anarchists in the government, had actually met in 1937 and 1938 with Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party with an eye to foster cooperation, but eventually these meetings came to nothing. Anarchists were indeed divided in regard to alliances, some leaning more towards working with conservatives, others towards socialists and even communists. Some guerrillas formed by anarchists, despairing at the ineffectiveness and inability (unwillingness?) of both the Guomindang and the Korean Provisional Government to fight the Japanese, ended up going to Yan'an to fight the Japanese with the support of the Chinese Communist Party. These tensions and contradictions in relation to alliances were reflected in the post-1945 trajectories of some of the leading anarchist fighters and activists of this period: some anarchists, such as Yu Ja-Myeong, ended up having prominent roles in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, others occupied important posts in the South Korean military, such as Bak Giseong, and yet others ended up as activists in South Korea suffering from perennial persecution and hardship, such as Jeong Hwaam (p.148).

Cold War anarchists

After Japan was expelled from the Korean peninsula in 1945, in the context of World War II, with the North occupied by the Soviet Union and the South by the USA, the Cold War -of which Korea became a frontline, as attested by the brutal War of 1950-1953- exacerbated these feature in the Korean anarchist movement. While in the North it is uncertain what happened to the anarchists, although some defected, and some collaborated, it is most likely that the radical space of anarchism was completely co-opted by the communists led by Kim Il Sung. In South Korea, on the other hand, a series of authoritarian governments and dictatorships, all extremely anti-communist in nature, could only reluctantly tolerate a movement which rejected any commonality with the communist ideology -thus, anarchists would shift towards cooperative experiences, rural development and the idea of a harmonious relationship between countryside and urban centres as the key to national development took central stage, as opposed to the revolutionary tenets of pre-1945 anarchists. Kropotkin again was instrumental to give a continuity in ideological terms to the movement into this new phase of its development.

This de-radicalisation of anarchism, which eventually favoured an autonomous government, which combined democracy with notions of equality and freedom. The main concern of South Korean anarchists then became how to develop Korea 'as an autonomous country with minimum social problems that had been prevalent in the capitalist countries and at the same time without communist intrusion' (p.188). Many of them stopped questioning imperialism or even capitalism after 1945, with anarchists even cooperating with the New Village Movement of the 'modernising' dictatorship of Park in the early 1970s. Although many of these decisions may have been pragmatic, as Hwang argues, reflecting the difficulty of bringing forward anarchist proposals in the context of a totalitarian anti-communist regime at risk of being labelled communist and therefore being tortured and executed, together with the hostile environment in the Cold War South Korea to anything resembling socialism, it still reflects some ideological trends which developed before 1945. In particular, the nationalist strand, the anti-communist proclivities, the idea of a national front, all conspired for the movement to stop questioning South Korean capitalism and State, and indeed supporting them however critically. This means that when a new wave of protests brought together people to protest the dictatorships and the neoliberal reforms in the South during the 1980s and 1990s, anarchists did not play a significant role.

"I don't think," writes Hwang, "the active involvement or even initiative by Korean anarchists in the formation of the Korean National Front in 1930s and 40s in China and their participation in the Korean Provisional Government before 1945 should be viewed as an aberration from anarchist basic principles (...). They did not lose their "anarchist voice" yet, but were only ready to accommodate anarchism to post-1945 Korea" (p.156).

Yet, it is clear that gradually, in the process, important aspects of the anarchist revolutionary message were being lost in translation. Particularly, the critique of capitalism and of the State, which went from being accepted temporarily in the process of national liberation to being unquestioned. It is interesting to see today the Kurdish liberation movement dealing with similar demands imposed by their context, yet responding with a platform which remains anti-Statist in nature. Much could be learned from comparing these experiences and contrasting them, considering naturally the local circumstances of each respectively.

By way of conclusion

Until now, non-Korean speakers didn't have such a comprehensive, balanced and thoughtful history of Korean anarchism put together. We have to be thankful both of Dongyoun Hwang and of SUNY Press for publishing this book, which is undoubtedly a contribution to a better understanding of radical movements in the 20th century in general, and of anarchism in particular. Given the importance of this experience, and the wealth of lessons and debates, I think this book is of great interest to scholars in a wide range of disciplines, but also to activists interested in difficult problems such as those of decolonisation, development, anti-authoritarian politics and nationalisms.

The book, however, is hardly introductory and we need a cautionary note here. Hwang takes for granted that readers will have some basic –and not so basic– knowledge of Asian history and particularly of events in China, Japan and Korea. For best understanding of the book, I'd recommend previous reading of general and/or revolutionary histories of the 20th century in those countries. That said, it is a book which was long overdue and we can only praise that, finally, it has become available, filling an important gap.

Iran: The Working Class Raises Its Head

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/iran-working-class-raises-its-head>
from insurrection news worldwide dot com.

An analysis of the situation in Iran from an anarchist communist perspective.

After the “moderate” cleric Hassan Rouhani was re-elected in the Iranian presidential elections of 2017 his regime which had been pushing neo-liberal ideas continued on the same course. The public health service has been slashed so much it hardly exists, and job and workplace security have gone. Many jobs are now precarious (short-term contracts etc.) whilst the professionals-doctors, technicians, etc. have seen their living standards pushed down drastically. Whilst the capital Teheran has been allowed to grow, many regional cities and towns have seen conditions deteriorate, and the same goes for provision to the various ethnic groups within Iran.

Many people have been forced to cut back drastically on foodstuffs they had previously considered as essential (dairy and meat products). Unemployment is rampant. There is a whole swathe of young people born in the 1980s, many of whom are college and university graduates who have not been able to get jobs, or if they have are earning very low wages. Unemployment runs at 40% or more among young people.

The past year has seen a number of low-key and little reported demonstrations, rallies and sit-ins. These include bus drivers supporting their independent organisations, pensioners protesting against increasing attacks on their allowances, teachers and nurses protesting against their conditions, and students opposing the privatisation of education.

Rouhani pushed a new plan for unpaid internships which was strongly opposed by students. A leading activist among the bus drivers was imprisoned and treated appallingly.

This situation was aggravated by the earthquake of November 12th. Those who survived were treated contemptuously by officials which brought a wave of widespread disgust amongst the Iranian population. This was further aggravated by the annual budget announcement of the Rouhani regime. Damage from the earthquakes ran at \$600 million but the government failed to provide a reconstruction programme, leaving this up to donations from individuals! On the other hand various propaganda bodies of the regime received a budget of \$15. Fuel prices were increased by 50%. No funds were provided for state construction programmes.

In addition to this there was a growing awareness of widespread corruption and embezzlement among officials of the regime.

Matters came to a head with the first protest in Iran's second city Mashhad on December 28th. This city is a stronghold of the mullahs and has been a tax haven for the regime's functionaries. At the same time has seen a huge growth of slum areas.

It seems that the initial Mashhad protest was set off by fundamentalists of the political establishment opposed to Rouhani's "reformist" line- that is in opposition to his opening up Iran to foreign investment and a comparatively softer line to the West. However the protests quickly spread from Mashhad to other towns and cities and took on a different character. Heavily involved in the protests were many young people, those between the ages of fifteen and thirty, with no jobs and no job prospects or in precarious work situations. The protests centred on economic conditions, the corruption of the elite and the budget. Initial slogans of "Down with high prices!" were soon supplemented by "Down with the dictator" and "Death to Khamenei" - Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran. In addition many were concerned about the regime's involvement in armed intervention in Syria and Iraq. This attempt by the regime to increase its influence in the region has resulted in growing anger about not just lives expended in these ventures but vast amounts spent on wars whilst poverty and unemployment increase dramatically at home. This resulted in another slogan chanted on the streets: "Forget about Syria- think about us!"

Another factor at play has been the threat of climate change with drought severely affecting crops. Two summers ago, the oil town of Bandar-e Mahshahr experienced a temperature of 163 degrees Fahrenheit. It is predicted that if worldwide emissions are not reduced drastically then by 2070 the Persian Gulf could experience temperatures impossible or humans to survive.

But the protests have been riddled with contradictions with politicians pushing bourgeois democracy attempting to hijack the protests, as well as supporters of the overthrown Shah and various reactionary religious currents. This was countered by many among the youth taking part in the protests. Reactionary slogans that appeared like "Neither Gaza nor Lebanon, I will die only for Iran" and "We are Aryans, we don't worship Arabs" were countered with "From Gaza to Iran, down with the exploiters". Other slogans referred to the setting up of people's councils and against the false division between reformist and fundamentalist tendencies of the regime.

Tens of thousands have taken part in protests and at least twenty one have been killed by the brutal security forces, and many arrested. The regime claimed victory, with General Mohammad Ali Jafari, leader of the Revolutionary Guards, a paramilitary force that has kept the regime in power for decades, saying "Today we announce the end of the sedition". However, since then protests have continued to break out.

The regime has attempted to blame the protests are being managed by the USA and its regional allies Israel and Saudi Arabia. Indeed Trump has tweeted his "support" for the protestors. The emergence of the Iranian working class in these protests contradicts all of this. Trump has overseen the rich in the United States being rewarded with huge tax cuts. To pay for this means huge attacks on health care, social security and other welfare benefits. And of course there are the many allegations of corruption against the Trump regime. How different is the situation for American workers from that of Iranian workers?

Similarly Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has praised the protestors. Again, how different is the situation of workers within the Israeli state when thousands have protested there against the corruption of the Netanyahu administration at the same time as the protests in Iran?

We also have "anti-imperialist" leftists chiming in, especially in the USA, implying the protests are manipulated by the CIA and tacitly supporting the theocratic regime in Iran.

For ourselves, as anarchist communists, we support the developing protests of the working class in Iran. Repression may temporarily stop this movement but it is a sign of the working class re-asserting itself as crises continue in all the political institutions around the world, including within the left parties. The 2008 financial crisis resulted in massive attacks on the working class around the world, attacks on pensions and social benefits, the slashing of public services, increasing divisions between rich and poor and a constant threat of war. Now these pressures are resulting in re-emerging revolts.

Finally, the 1979 revolution in Iran which overthrew the Shah saw huge demonstrations, the occupation of factories and the development of workers' councils. It was thought impossible that such a heavily armed

regime as that of the Shah could be overthrown, yet it happened. This was betrayed by the Stalinist Tudeh party, which had great influence among the working class. Tudeh's decision to ally with the Shia cleric the Ayatollah Khomeini because he was seen as a progressive leader of a democratic revolution, enabled him to come to power. As a result Tudeh was silenced as were all left and progressive groups. The strong secular traditions in Iran were smothered. Khomeini recuperated some of the demands of the 1979 Revolution with pseudo-socialist rhetoric whilst at the same time calling for national unity and creating illusions in the common interests of the rich and poor.

Ayatollah Khomeini was a misogynist of the first order. The Family Protection Law enacted under the Shah's regime was suspended and women once more were at the mercy of men within the family. The Islamic dress code was imposed on women including girls from the first grade in school. At first pushing for population growth, the regime later reversed this policy and brought in a highly successful family planning programme, which resulted in Iran having the lowest population growth in the region. The regime reversed this again when it cut off funding to the programme in 2012.

The marriage age for girls was reduced to puberty, the age of nine under Islamic law. Punishments of flogging, stoning and payment of blood money were introduced in 1981 for crimes like adultery and violation of the Islamic dress code.

Government funded day centres were closed down, making it difficult to stay in work.

Women had played an important role in the 1979 Revolution. Khomeini used cooption to tame this development. Women's right to vote was retained as was right to run in elections and women served in government positions at a national and local level. However they were often demoted or dismissed or given early retirement from these positions.

During the first ten years of the theocratic regime, women in work fell from 13% of the population to 8.6%. The Iran -Iraq war meant that women came forward as nurses, doctors and in other support roles. Rafsanjani, one of the founders of the regime was able to mobilise women's votes and portrayed himself as a comparative liberal as regards women's rights. It was he who installed the family planning programme. These policies were continued under the next president Mohammad Khatami. With the coming to power of Ahmadinejad these trends were reversed. The family planning programme was closed down.

Under Rouhani a loosening of attitudes as regards dress code was allowed, but this was against the move by security forces to clamp down on any development of feminism. But now women are involving themselves in the protests. One brave woman removed her hijab during a recent protest and waved it around on a stick to protest the dress code. We hope this is a sign of things to come. A successful revolution in Iran depends utterly on the role of women within it. The liberation of women must be a major motif of that revolution.

The rule by mullahs has lasted almost four decades. It rests primarily on the subjection of women and of the working class. Next time the working class moves into action in Iran it has to sweep away the mullahs, be they "fundamentalist" or "reformist".

Notes Concerning the Black Clothing Worn by Some Anarchist Men and Muslim Women

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/notes-concerning-black-clothing-worn-some-anarchist-men-and-muslim-women>
via dingpolitik

A performative/spontaneous talk I gave two or three years ago at the Modernist Studies Association. Recorded and transcribed, and uploaded here.

[special thanks to allan antliff and roger rothman]¹

St. John of the Cross wrote in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel* that "understanding can understand naught save that which is contained within." This lesson was repeated three hundred years later when Jacques-Alain Miller

¹special thanks to allan antliff and roger rothman (footnote added by anew ed. to make footies work)

claimed that “[o]ne only understands what one thinks one already knows.” I can not pretend to introduce anything new here except to claim that the function of understanding is also to make an advance on anxiety. There where anxiety seemed to be, within the work of listening, are formed certain casual “habits.” A habit is a bit like a schema or a heuristic in that it provides the subject with an interpretative framework for the utterances of others.

My claim is that the work of listening is directly implicated in the concerns of the aesthete. In other words, the work of listening is bound up with what Immanuel Kant referred to as the judgment of taste. Those who listen are not only *passive* receivers of an auditory exchange – the *active* construction of meaning by those who listen is of such significance that psychoanalysts have developed an ethics of listening with which to conduct their daily work. We might even claim that listening is precisely the mode of meaning production for the other who speaks; the speaker being reduced, in some sense, to the role of consumer.

The work of listening therefore rubs up against all sorts of aesthetic judgements, including those judgments made in the world of fashion. The word “habit” is closely linked to the Latin *habitus* and is not far removed from *habilis*. The former has to do with “clothing for the body,” clothing which, etymology reveals, introduces a logic of being “possessed,” “managed,” or “held.” “Having,” substitutes, as Lacan once put it, “one object for another;” “clothes” act as a substitute for the “body.”

On the other hand, the word *habilis*, which, like *habitus*, is rooted in *habere*, adds the association of “habilitation.” The habilitation is concerned with a type of recognition for those who demonstrate the appropriate understanding. What is most curious about the word *habilis* is that it carries a strong sense of being about “fit.” Habilitation ensures that we are recognized by the fit of our clothes as being or having some body rather than no body. This aspect of the function of understanding is so confirmed in our cultural vernacular that we have developed a special idiom which expresses that “if the shoe fits, wear it.”

Recall Marshall McLuhan’s claim that clothing is a direct extension of the outer surface of the body. In other words, it extends the skin’s tactility and insulation. His point was that clothing keeps us from seeing the “whole picture” of the nude body. This type of body is what clinicians refer to as “imaginary,” that is, the body envisioned as if it were reducible to that which is discernible, and not, as it were, as a limitation or excess. It also can not be divorced from the hidden body, which is no less imaginary, as I have found within my clinic, and which reveals itself often as a request for telephone analysis.

Colette Soler has claimed the Freudian concept of libido was invented to describe that movement “which pushes the human being towards [...] the object [...] [by] looking for a part of itself outside itself in some fashion, which assures you of an extension of yourself outside yourself.” Perhaps McLuhan’s thesis was perfectly aligned with today’s post-continental world of “category theory” and “extensionality;” a world where an object exists only because of its relationship to some other object. But Soler cautioned that this extension is always ‘only possible on the basis of a prior subtraction [...] castration.’ Lacan’s early critique of “object relations” demonstrated that this understanding simply doesn’t ‘fit’ the Freudian doctrine of the unconscious. Freud’s discovery avoids the ossification of the object, it avoids, for example, the ‘identity morphism’ of category theory.

It was written in a holy book that “Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed.” My first mistake was to presume that the Hebrew word “ashamed” necessarily carries the sense of being embarrassed over the exposition of the body or its genitals. I learned that the Hebrew word “ashamed” is actually closer to “not being covered,” which implies that the two were *not* being *not* covered.² To my pleasant surprise, my discovery was confirmed already by Pope John Paul II, who said that “they were not ashamed’ [does] not express a lack, but, on the contrary, [it] serves to indicate a particular fullness of consciousness and experience.”³

It was after the digestion of a crucial signifier that they made clothing for themselves and they became “ashamed” only in the sense of being “not covered.” It is because of the relative ease of imagining *not* being covered (as opposed to *not* being *not* covered) that Lacan introduced anxiety as a moment of *not* being *without* an object. *Not* being *not* covered, or, put another way, *not being ashamed*, indicates not a return to a positive

²http://jbnqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/421/JBQ_421_1_wordplay.pdf

³<https://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/jp2tb12.htm>

proposition but rather that the object relation was much more obscure. I invite you all to read the Catechism on the meaning of original human experiences by Pope John Paul II as a confirmation of this view.⁴

This may all seem as if it were debauchery, and Lacan claimed as much when he stated that “clothes promise debauchery when one takes them off.”⁵ After all, before the loincloths, Adam and Eve *had a perfect sexual relationship*. Debauchery, by the way, is a type of excessive enjoyment; excessive in the sense of destruction. Bakunin, in one of his political letters, claimed that destruction is a creative passion, and, I find this confirmed by the clinical evidence which suggests that the suffering body creates. Adam and Eve fashioned for themselves clothes out of fig leaves – a truly creative act! The imaginary body is not the only body, there is also the real body of the *objet petit a*, the body which one is *not without*: the real body is what remains. Lacan once said that “what lies under the habit, what we call the body, is perhaps but the remainder.”⁶ This shines some light on the insistence by some theologians that the Hebrew word for “ashamed” must be translated as “remainder.”

Lacan, in his fourth seminar, said: “[c]lothing is not only made to hide what one has [...] but also precisely what one does not have. [...] It is not a matter, essentially and always, of hiding the object, but also of hiding the lack of the object.” Note, then, that the holy text has highlighted very nicely that clothing was to hide “nakedness” and not, as it were, to hide the substantial genital organs. The Hebrew word used in the book עֲרֻמִּים (*‘arummim*) expresses a lack of something, as in, for example, the book of Job when the word was used to express that “destruction hath no covering.” We could claim that clothing, as a type of “Urverdrängung” or “primal repression”⁷ hides the fact of lack, but we could also claim, since destruction hath no covering, that clothing is the result of a self-fashioned body from the excessive ‘real.’⁸

Why shouldn’t we use this as an opportunity to think about the function of the veil for some Muslims?

Muslim women patients frequently explain to me that the burqa or niqab is a way for them to “be” recognized as a proper woman under Islam. I have found in my practice that there is a sort of masquerade here, demonstrated to me often by the reoccurring claim that when they were young their fathers might have wanted them to be a boy. These women discover what many little girls come to discover which is that one possible solution to trauma of the real body is to “dress up like a boy and do boy things.” In other words, clinical evidence suggests that sometimes a woman dresses herself up in the fabric of a proper body, so as to conceal, finally, the dark secret of her real body. However, they do not introduce an imaginary body – the figure is obscured in the clothing – but rather a symbolic body. They build one for themselves out of the raw materials of their clothing.

Many Muslim patients express to me that they find themselves at odds with local men after moving to the American continent. There is even a case of a woman suddenly discovering, after 35 years of wearing her hijab, that she was wearing it improperly. This was a consequence of her new found interest in the subtleties of her religion. I am sharing this only to demonstrate that the way men looked at her was absolutely bound up with her new habits. To some extent, they were the reason for her body. So, her hijab was tightened, and the symbolic body was perfected. The symbolic body of the woman is self-fashioned through an active interrogation of the desire of the Other. Thus, for the woman, the self-fashioning involves, on the one hand, an invention of the desire of the Other so as to secure for herself a consistent habit of the self.

In any case, the skin beneath the hijab is only further clothing, and the muscle beneath the skin is further clothing, and the bone, etc. Until we finally reach the limits of clothing, the inaccessible real body – which is also the limit to understanding. This is why the real body is neither the discernible nude body nor the body in extension; the real body is irreducible, inconsistent, and, for that reason, it has a strange relation to our clothing

⁴<https://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/jp2tb11.htm>

⁵Seminar XX, p. 6.

⁶Seminar XX

⁷Freud, 1915 – Repression: “We have reason to assume that there is a *primal repression* [*Urverdrängung*], a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representative of the drive being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a *fixation* is established; the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it.”

⁸The first position begins with the symbolic and finds there a primary repression of the encounter with the name/no of the father. The second position begins with a first real which, precisely through the introduction of a body, produces a second order real of lack. For example, Paul Verhaeghe wrote that “the idea of primal repression is the most interesting one because we can situate there the drive root of the symptom, the Real. It is only with the after-repression that the Symbolic component comes into being. For Freud, this is always a “faulty connection” (*falsche Verknüpfung*) between a drive component and a representation.

and to our habits of listening. We therefore come to recognize why, in Ecclesiastes, it was written that scholastic habits are “a weariness of the *flesh*.” McLuhen’s thesis is here supplemented: clothes *are* extensions of the skin, but, only insofar as skin is not reducible to the real body.

In any case, there comes a moment in analysis when the analysand discovers that her clothes do not fit as originally thought.

The analyst has been put in the position of *making them fit better*, in other words, of offering an acceptable interpretation to the analysand.

The psychoanalyst is made an expert in matters of fashion.

I want to turn now to the anarchist black bloc. Those who participate in the black bloc tactic dress in black clothing from head to toe. This offers certain tactical advantages for an individual to rush outside of the group, toss a brick, and return back into the group without being recognized. If a bit of colour is worn then the individual can no longer remain submerged within and thereby protected by the others. What becomes recognized, effectively, during these moments, is the lack within the consistency of the black clothing. The consequent anxiety generates a situation in which members of the bloc rush in to act as a shield for deviating members of the bloc, or so as to administer medical attention to the injured, etc.

The body must remain consistent – this is the rule for the black bloc!

The signifier of “black” masters the debauched real body. If one can *be-lack*, that is, wear the signifier of lack, then one can *have* lack. This explains why one anarchist author wrote that the black clothing of anarchists “is simply black fabric *with nothing on it* [...] [it is an] anti-colour swallowing all the others.” This anarchist did not write that black clothing is the *absence* of clothing but rather that it is the *presence* of clothes *with* nothing...

This difference is absolutely crucial.

It is not well known that Lacan added to the list of partial objects, “the nothing.” This changed the clinical understanding of anorexia, the trademark of which was no longer the rejection of food but rather the eating of “the nothing.” To eat the nothing is to digest the desire of the maternal Other. Lacan said that “the gift of love [...] is a gift of nothing.” The mother issues the demand to eat, and the anorexic swallows only the remainder, only the love.

“Love,” claimed Lacan, “is what appears in the form of bizarre signs on the body.”

When the bloc speaks, what we end up hearing is that they “demand nothing.” The demand for nothing reveals a desire to be loved for the body which it has, the body which, in a most clever way, it has fashioned for itself as an attempt to master the problem of lack. In one anarchist periodical it was written that “[i]n demanding nothing, [we] can stay continuous throughout the many shifts and transformations within the movement.” In another, *Fire to the Prisons*, somebody wrote that “[t]he demand is a tool for self-organization. It unifies separated individuals against a common enemy [...]”

The body of the bloc marches under a black flag, which is to march with a non-sensical anchoring point – best expressed by the signifier, “nothing.” I see no reason why we can not refer to this as a *master* signifier: anarchy, after all, is, as Proudhon boldly claimed, *order*.

This is how a body is formed when there is no authority. When there is no prohibitive symbolic function then this symbolic function must be fashioned on one’s own as a defence against the traumatic encounter with the real body, the real nothingness – a nothingness which is never reducible to the partial object. This consistent and self-fashioned partial object is what Lacanians refer to as a *semblant*.

The *master* signifier is the *semblant* par excellence! The signifier of “black” or “nothing” introduces a much needed body, as well as a boundary between bodies. This explains why Jacques-Alain Miller once claimed that the *semblant* is a way to “convert nothing into something,” that is, by “phallicizing the body,” or, put another way, of making a traumatic nothingness perfectly consistent.

We know that the black bloc do not present themselves as following the law – often it is quite the opposite. We also know women who wear the black burqa or niqab often believe themselves to be strictly obedient to Islamic law. This difference is extremely important because it demonstrates that the masculine logic of black clothing is to present oneself as *having* mastery of lack, while the feminine logic of black clothing is to present oneself as *being* no-body, symbolically.

I want to conclude with these threads – I did not offer you much clothing! – simply to highlight, there within the respective masculine and feminine registers, the logic of *having* and *being* with respect to the real body *with nothing on it*.

Illegalist Praxis: Notes on a Decade of Crime

<https://anarchistnews.org/content/illegalist-praxis-notes-decade-crime-0>

Paul Z. Simons

(I am, on occasion, asked about my time in with the worlds of the lawless. And while reticent to discuss any current activities that might be construed, by anyone, as being illegal; I realize that as regards my earlier shenanigans, the statute of limitations is in my corner. Before I begin, a disclaimer or two, first I never knowingly physically harmed anyone. Material harm? Property harm? Different story. Second, most of my criminal activities were driven by survival, in some cases by desperation—the need to eat, to obtain shelter, to keep a needle in my arm. It was only later that I realized the political ramifications of these actions; their moment as a rejection of nation-state and Capital. In effect, their resonance.—pzs)

Basic Terms

Robbery- Usually armed. The use of force or the threat of the use of force to get money or goods from a store or a person. Considered sloppy, violent, usually counter-productive by most of the people I ran with. Why threaten a person or business when you can walk away unharmed by just outsmarting them?

Burglary- Breaking into, entering, and relieving a domicile, office, or business of valuable property or cash.

Burn and Return- Shoplifting valuable goods from a store and then returning them for a cash refund. The vast majority of my crime-time fits into this category.

Shoplifting- Relieving a store or business of property (during business hours). Child's play—dangerous and stupid—would you trade a candy bar for a pair of handcuffs?

A quick philosophical footnote, money taken in crime is far sweeter than money earned. The fact that one relies on oneself, or a group, to outthink, outsmart and outbrave some stupid boss and his security precautions turns ill-gotten gains into reward beyond compare. Plus, the hours, while short and nerve wracking, are never boring.

Oddly, one of the best ways to begin a burglary is by getting a job in the store you plan to hit. In general places that have loads of cash, that deal with deposits in a lazy fashion, and that trust you just enough to let you know that the burglary alarms are, "just for show." After a week or two of drudgery, you're ready. The neighborhood is dead quiet at night, there are rear entrances that haven't been used in years, and hopefully those entrances have windows. Timing is key and I recommend between 3 and 4 in the morning on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. The cops are all changing out shifts, the security guards (if any) are drinking coffee somewhere trying to stay awake, and the neighbors are all tucked in their beds. Windows can be easily removed by breaking through the glass with a cloth wrapped hammer and steel bars can be separated using a tire jack. If the back is lit by floodlights unscrew them. For windows placed high, use a car as a boost to reach them. A quick dash into the establishment—to exactly the place where you know the days cash receipts are hid—and out. A peek in the rear view mirror to make sure you you're clean—and gone. Like it never happened. The rewards from burglaries can be surprising, in one short twenty minute stint I walked off with almost \$5,000. They can also be disheartening, one burglary took almost an hour and netted less than \$300—but that was the exception.

The Burn and Return is a form of crime unique to that bastion of suburban capitalism, the Box Store. In general Box Stores need to appeal to the suburban dweller who fancies him or herself a do-it-your-self type. Therefore their return policies are insanely lax—for the time when Joe Suburb buys an 80 watt fuse when a 40 watt was needed. Further, they usually require no sales receipt, and will dole out up to \$100 so long as person hasn't had a return in the previous week. As a friend of mine often commented, "Home Depot is the junkies ATM." How it goes is this—you saunter through a Box Store looking like a normal customer, pocket something worth about a hundred dollars and exit stage left. Drive to yet another Box Store of the same brand and return the thing. Trick is they will always look at your ID, likely a driver license to make sure that you haven't been returning goods at

a freakishly rapid pace. Luckily, in the state I was living when these nefarious goings on occurred, the drivers license number was easily changed with a red felt-tip pen, some cigarette ash and a heart of pure forgery. As an example my driver's license number included three "8's" and these were easily changed to "6's" or "3's." I therefore had a whole universe of numerical permutations to use when returning shit I had stolen. It should be noted that when this was happening in the 90's that none of the Box Stores kept any centralized computer records at all. Going from one Loews to another was like going from one planet to another—"take me to your return line." I should also note that the security at these stores is horrible, one afternoon a group of friends and I, as part of a special order, decamped from a Home Depot with a bathtub, sink and mirror set—and no one paid any attention as we grumbled and pushed the heavy bathroom ensemble through a cordon of screaming theft detectors.

Finally, car theft. While this was an outlier on my experience it was important. Car theft—for law enforcement, is huge—producing its own fateful sounding charge—grand theft auto. Therefore it was only used when absolutely necessary—as in needing a car to reach a window, or to affect a getaway from a Box Store. The trick is, its pretty easy, because people are lazy. None of my friends or me had the skills to actually hot-wire a car, but we didn't need to. At that time an incredible number of people left their cars out on the street, unlocked and with the keys somewhere inside. It was crazy. One time two friends and I walked a street in the dead of night and found no less than three cars—on a single block—we could have stolen. We only took one. It should be noted that we always left the autos, unharmed, somewhere that they would be found—and in one case even left a thank you note. A Camaro I think—it was a sweet ride.

In closing these activities occurred a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away; in the 90's specifically, your criminal experience may vary. In my mind crime functions as a resonance between politics, desperation and fun. And what better way to triangulate insurrection? Many Happy Escapes.

The Anarchist Library Bookshelf

ANEWS
ATUBES: January 2018
Digest of the Anarchist Tubes
January, 2018

<https://anarchistnews.org>
Volume #4, Issue #1.

bookshelf.theanarchistlibrary.org