

SMASHING THE CRYSTAL BALL:
POST-STRUCTURAL INSIGHTS ASSOCIATED WITH CONTEMPORARY
ANARCHISM AND THE REVISION OF BLUEPRINT UTOPIANISM

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the images which define revolution's meaning. It suggests a possible shifting of emphasis from the scientific imaginary which centres on identifying the correct way to totalising revolution, towards a post-structuralist-anarchistic imaginary which privileges prefigurative radicalisations of social relations in the here and now. It looks specifically at how the field of post-structuralism intertwines with historically anarchist concepts to generate an horizon of social change animated by experimental and open-ended transformations. While the thesis offers positive characterisations of the types of contemporary movements, tactics and principles which embody the change from closed to open utopianism, it is chiefly a commentary on the role of theory in depicting the complexity of relations on the ground and the danger of proposing one totalising pathway from one state of society to another. It asks the reader to consider, given the achievements of movements and given the insights of post-structuralism, whether it is still worthwhile to proclaim certainty when sketching the possibilities for transcendence toward emancipation, an aim, which in itself, is always under construction. I engage this by firstly establishing a practical foundation for the critique of end-points in theory by exploring the horizontal and prefigurative nature of a few autonomous movements today. Secondly I propose the contemporary theory of post-structuralist anarchism as concomitant with conclusions about transformation made in the first chapter. Finally I recommend a few initial concepts to start debate about the way forward from old objectivist models of transformation. The uncertainties of daily life, crumbling of economic powers and rapid pace of change in the twenty-first century have opened up fantastic spaces for innovative thought. Reconsidering old consensus around what constitutes a desirable image of revolution is of considerable importance given today's burgeoning bottom-up political energy and the global debate surrounding the possibilities for bottom-up revolutionisation of society. I submit that theories which portray stories of permanent, pure and natural end-points to revolution are deficient justifications for radical action.

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INTRODUCTION

In all the theories which exist at any given moment to explain society, there are those which explain by circumscription and then there are those which reach beyond categorisation, to capture the ineffable impulses which lay at the heart of definition. The latter grasp at the elusive shadows of human experience and extend our capacity to understand social constructs beyond the fixities of “category”. This is a cluster of theories to which post-structuralism belongs. In contemporary times post-structuralism has alighted on the domain of theory with novel messages of the deep-seated subjectivity which constitutes reality.

Post-structuralism is a field of philosophy broadly concerned with “the interrogation of the discursive limits of universality” (Newman 2005a:144). It is an approach developed predominantly by French theorists who hail from the post-1968 intellectual terrain and who broke away from Marxism which posited ‘fixed ideas’ about social meaning and change. It was developed most notably by Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guatarri and Julia Kristeva in order to criticise the bounded categories of Enlightenment philosophy, in particular, the way in which this philosophy subordinates emancipative notions such as democracy, liberty and freedom to absolutist frameworks of knowledge. It can be seen as a philosophic-intellectual movement which “rejects totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives and the possibility of objective human knowledge. It is sceptical of truth, unity and opposes what it sees as elitism in culture, celebrates plurality, discontinuity and heterogeneity” (Eagleton 2003:15). The importance which post-structuralism places on questioning the naturalness of ‘category’ has come to render the tone of positivism, which once defined modern thought, as potentially harmful. Therefore in recent years it has become imperative to develop approaches which prevent the concreteness of conceptualisation from betraying the instabilities which actually undergird meaning in life.

The traditional duty of theory to calculate objective prescriptions is undermined by post-structuralism. This has major implications for the perceived relationship between discourse and the requirements for social change. Post-structural theory has reduced the role of intellectuals as producers of defined pathways applicable across people at large. It has filtered into the socio-political imaginary, breaking that glorified image of the sage with his crystal ball who bestows

with great refinement the universal answers which will account as laws of emancipation and development.

There is no denying post-structuralism's presence, yet there is still so much to explore in terms of its effects. One wonders how the construction of theory around non-universality may change perceptions about identity and space, and how changed perceptions in turn may alter notions of social possibility. It is precisely this, the impact of post-structural theory on the imaginative ethic of social change, which I set out to explore. To do this I compare the anti-authoritarian nature of post-structuralism with the anti-authoritarianism of anarchism and its views on radical social change. Anarchism defines historically the element of non-vanguardism in political discourse which post-structuralism is picking up now again in this era. When post-structuralism is combined with anarchism, an epistemological complex known as post-structuralist anarchism or "post-anarchism" emerges. Post-structuralist anarchism takes post-structuralism which centres on removing fixed identities and infuses it with the revolutionary tradition of anarchist thought.

Post-structuralism and anarchism are both rejections of political authority; for anarchism this takes the form predominantly of anti-statist resistance and organisation and for post-structuralism it takes the form of critiques against universalist representations. Therefore the combination of post-anarchism takes the project of anti-authoritarianism one step further, by tracing the crepuscular life of political vanguardism to the roots of knowledge construction itself. Post-anarchists ultimately believe that "putting liberation under a single sign is a fantasy; total liberation has never, and will never exist" (Day 2005:154). This is very different to the traditions of high modernity where orthodox Marxists and classical anarchists alike were inclined to dream in detail the circumstances for en-mass revolutions which would capture whole societies at once. For post-anarchists, this gives rise to crude foundationalism in theory which only reaffirms authoritarianism and domination and needs to be rethought in terms of the contemporary project for equality and truth.

Anarchism is a realm of subversive socio-political change which is very complementary to post-structuralism, but one can see in classical anarchism the inheritance of Enlightenment thought. This is evident in the tone of classical anarchists like Mikhail Bakunin who calls for the "*tabula rasa* the complete destruction of *all* authority as the prerequisite to a free society" (Bakunin 1964 cited in: Seyferth 2009: 297; my emphasis) through using instruments like "invisible

dictatorships” (Clark 2009:14) – because Enlightenment sketchings of liberation were so large that once internalised as the stage for change, made people automatically beholden to expert advisors. Even the great classical anarchists such as Bakunin who positioned themselves as the disciples of self-determination made such grand work of normative theory that they stand contradictorily as leaders of just-and-true-for-all rationalities. The control which classical frameworks gave theorists over “the revolution” appears to treat blindly how the creation of conceptual categories is itself an operation of power so much so that theorists took it upon themselves to generate “the correct set of ideas” which would revolutionise the world “if only the masses finally learn[ed] how to pay attention” (Clark 2009:15). The authoritarian elements of anarchism may indeed be in the minority of its thought, but it is there, and post-structuralism can help to mitigate its effects to improve the greater realm of anti-authoritarian discourse. This is an opportunity for anarchist philosophy which has long been marginalised but not actually refuted to allow post-structuralist infusions to “offer it critical resources to help bring it closer to the ground” (Newman 2010a: 2).

By mediating anarchism’s idealism with the ambiguity of post-structuralism, post-anarchism allows an exploration of what emerges when we combine political commitments with an acknowledgment of social indeterminism and concomitant anti-authoritarian styles of discourse. What emerges? What forms does it take? This is the major gap which post-anarchism contributes to opening up, and why it deserves more attention from the radical community.

If we can hold up anti-domination as important but at the same time recognise that achieving emancipation is not determinable in the way that theorists of the past set out to portray, then an appreciation for new practices can emerge. One such outcome I suggest is that revolution be dismantled as an image of future perfection and transformed into a different type of dream. One of the earliest “open anarchist” thinkers, Gustav Landauer (1978/1911 :83) said “who knows how long we would have already had the revolution behind us, if we had never given a thought to the coming one”. Post-structuralism offers us an additional opportunity to think about revolution so that we are no longer pressured to justify practices of freedom by making up complete predictions or reciting doctrinaire scrolls.

The aim of the thesis is to explore which contemporary conditions make the reconstitution of ‘revolution’ meaningful for radical sociology. I outline two conditions, contemporary anarchism

(Chapter One) and post-structuralism (Chapter Two). Chapters One and Two are dedicated to answering why it is desirable today to opt for progressive politics which do not necessitate scientific detailing and historical inevitability. Based on the suggestions made in the first two, Chapter Three tackles how we may go about re-conceiving of revolution.

The first chapter, “Contemporary Radicals”, raises doubt about old positivistic accounts of revolution based on how real transformation on the ground occurs open-endedly and experimentally. It starts off with the tactics (direct action, direct democracy, and experimentalism) which can be found in contemporary movements which are largely open-ended and unsupported by traditional Marxism.

At a distance to theory, we find communities of struggle and spaces of radical (dis)organisation, where people act against oppressive regimes of political “truths” and “order” by carving out in everyday situations arrangements which they control without the government rationality of vanguards. I aim to show how the applications of revolutionary action in spaces as diverse as Mexico, South Africa and the United States of America stand against the controlling spirit of traditional revolutionary discourse because they attempt to build radical bases with “no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy and no separate ruling entity” (Alfred 1999: 56). Social movements show up the questionability of those theories which want us to believe that unified practical or ideological triggers can subsume all of society in the name of revolution. Practice tends to expose the means and ends of anti-systemic mobilisation to be constitutively open, not natural or scientific.

The focus of Chapter One’s critique is Marxism because its influence on ingrained images of revolution is unparalleled. In this thesis, for reasons of convenience as much as anything else, only the authoritarian forces of Marxism are concentrated on. “Traditional Marxism” portends to thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Kautsky. Like anarchism, I recognise that Marxism has many different voices and that many of its more current interpretations do provide guides for contemporary revolts¹. But by dismissing Marxism based on its overall incongruence

¹ A lack of space in this thesis to outline the post-modern tracts in Marxism comes at the price of appearing to hector this tradition. It is important to acknowledge that some believe Marxism can also accommodate the best aspects of post-structuralism. See for instance Choat (2010b).

with contemporary radicals I show, as David Graeber (2007a: 318) says, that “rather than disappearing as a political horizon, revolutionary projects are being renewed along new lines”. In fact I show that the “new lines” along which movements are being renewed are explicitly anarchistic in nature. I suggest that prefiguration, direct action, direct democracy and experimentation are an ensemble of anarchist practices from which fresh imaginaries for twenty-first century social change are emerging.

Chapter Two, “Through the Lens of Post-Structuralist Anarchism” continues with the task of Chapter One by providing a second reason for re-conceiving revolution. Where the first chapter provides the practical reason, the second provides the philosophical bases for critique. Chapter Two shows how post-structuralism, particularly in the form of post-structuralist anarchism, supports open-ended visions for political change. It answers to the question, “Which aspects of post-structuralism support theoretically a non-eschatological view of society-based change?” There are many ways of approaching this. To me post-structuralist anarchism’s approach to human nature and power specifically, are what result in a particularly terrain-changing conclusion for progressive politics – and that conclusion is- that totalising change is structurally impossible.

I explain how post-anarchism’s rejection of foundationalism includes a rejection of the human condition as fixed. Therefore post-anarchists see as false all ideas which portray revolution as the struggle to free a fixed moral essence from the distortions of concrete power. To them this relies on an image of a pure human condition up against power, an unlikely ontology, because power is not an external target but flows through all relations and identities. In short, human identities are not essential, but are themselves constituted by flows of irreducible and infinite power. Here classical anarchism is the focus of my critique. For all its anti-hierarchism, anarchism’s traditional form contains the simplistic Manichean distinction of fixed good essence versus bad power which post-structuralists say lead to false ideas about inevitability and universality when depicting revolution. I present post-anarchism as part of a movement in thinking, identifiable by post-modern methods which also manifest today in the natural and physical sciences. It is a far-reaching attitude which responds to the futility of resolving discursive conquests to find laws and patterns on behalf of outcomes which have not occurred. This is particularly futile when standardising the scope of something as subterranean as emancipation.

Once the crystal ball of political modernity is smashed by Chapters One and Two, the final chapter, “The Pursuit of the Present: Twenty-First Century Heterotopias” outlines a précis of concepts which sketch how representations can be reshaped. First in Chapter Three I suggest that we frame our gaze to the future in terms of utopianism. Next I distinguish the difference between the type of utopianism found in classical anarchism and that found in post-structuralist anarchism based on Michel Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia. I end the chapter’s discussion by suggesting three conceptual pillars – interstitiality, autonomy and impermanence – as spatio-temporal plinths for the future. The approach taken in this chapter is to offer some material suggestions for the way forward.

To recapitulate, the overall aim of the thesis is to sketch specific aspects which make up the imaginative ethic of emancipation today as it may stand if one could suspend the continuous motion of liberatory struggles and pick at its anatomy for clues by which to characterise this century. In keeping with world historical changes around political culture and social movements, I suggest anarchism, post-structuralism and utopianism as apposite foci for a uniquely twenty-first century narrative on socialism. This is a narrative which will tell only a partial story – it will undoubtedly caricature 19th century anarchism as it straddles the vicissitudes of contemporary anarchistic culture. It will indeed discuss only a minutia of *de facto* movements which characterise exciting turns in politics by its exclusive focus on anarchist practice. Not to mention its epigrammatic treatment of a field as dense as post-anarchism. One may at this stage of the confession decry the entire project a casualty of myopia. To be sure, however, the foreclosure of notions of anarchism, post-structuralism and utopianism *in situ* is not the contribution this thesis sets out to make. The study is not exhaustive of the three traditions (anarchism, post-structuralism and utopianism) but explores and presents the chiaroscuro at their intersection as ineluctable in shaping future critical thinking around social movements.

This thesis does set its sights on a creative synthesis of anarchist activism and post-structural theory in order to bespeak new demarcations in the normative culture of socialism (in the form of heterotopias). It is not my intention to claim that these new phenomena are sufficient as solutions to capitalism’s crises. But it is exactly because there is no silver bullet in the quest for an achievable socialist society – only a long tumultuous history of hope – that we continue to build on the history of old attempts by cultivating our own notions which, in the future, posterity may

build on. In this regard, iconoclast Bakhtin (1979:318) once said: “At any present moment of the dialogue there are great masses of forgotten meanings, but these will be recalled again at any given moment in the dialogue’s later course when it will be given new life”.

We have no apparent solution, but we have struggle. And it is the Copernican forms of consciousness generated through struggle which give us glimmers into the agency of people to create new worlds, that in turn allows us to continue our address of social change through theory. The value of this study is therefore not in the establishment of truths but it is grounded in the introduction of new revolutionary concepts and the encouragement of debate around related modes of action. It is not absolute answers around social change, but contemporary inflections in argument which this work seeks to highlight. To sum up, this thesis looks at post-structural insights associated with contemporary anarchism and the ways in which these insights possibly encourage a new type of utopian conception for the left, specifically looking at the move away from blueprint utopias towards critical heterotopias.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEMPORARY RADICALS

“Collective reinterpretations of revolutionary theory is long overdue” – George Katsiaficas
(2006:217)

1.1 Introduction

A dawning. At the rise of the twenty-first century and across the planet an emergent culture in anti-systemism can be gleaned. Vibrant communities around the world have in the past two decades organised themselves against the powers that be with a fervent logic that bears little resemblance to traditional labour-centric socialism or classical Marxism. The promise of neoteric currents in socialism is cast upon the future of emancipatory politics. The political terrain carved by the newest social movements is diverse²: from the peasant-based Zapatistas in Mexico’s Lacandon rainforest and *Abahlali baseMjondolo* the urban shack-dwellers movement in South Africa, to the *indignados* in Spain and ‘Occupy’ movements on the streets of New York (which have now led to similar mass occupations of public space in 951 cities in 82 countries around the world). In spite of their heterogeneity it is widely recognised that something identifiably new, other than orthodox Marxism, is animating the most radical anti-systemic movements in the twenty-first century. Striking points of convergence between the new radicals are hard to ignore. A marked point of convergence no doubt being the commitment to the freeing of the ‘political’ experience from formal ‘politics’ by cultivating transformative capacities outside of and against the stronghold of parliamentary officialdom.

The constellation of events which characterise the newest currents have boldly redirected post-Cold War socialism from the precipice of pessimism by stimulating tactics and philosophies

² The term “newest social movements” is used by Richard Day in response to the ‘new social movements’ of the 1960s and 1970s which carried out influential identity politics about defining oneself in terms of a minority category (sex, race, gender) and operating from a fixed centre. The new social movements were never autonomous, whereas the newest social movements pursue autonomy. Their radicalism was limited by a ‘politics of demand’ centred on lobbying around state recognition and the request for human rights to fundamentally be bequeathed from top to bottom.

which have defied overarching categorisation academically but have at the same time altered real life politically. A combination which has set off a deluge of thought beyond the fixities of old, and towards exciting new conceptions of a socialist future once again sponsored by a fecund turn in movements. In this chapter I set out to identify the nature of the newest social movements, and how this influences new images for transformation. In the following two chapters particular aspects of radical praxis and contemporary theory set the stage for the propulsive question of the thesis – “How do these changes compel us to think about revolution differently in the twenty-first century?” Chapter One focuses specifically on the changes within radical social movement culture which today raise certain questions about the relevance of traditional approaches to revolution’s meaning. Chapter One covers:

- The tactics which can be found in contemporary movements which are largely unsupported by traditional theories and which therefore beggar alternative approaches in revolutionary discourse;
- The placement of these practical trends within an adjusted view of anarchism;
- How new praxes form the bases for new political imaginaries; and
- Reflections on the revolutionary potential of words.

A rejection of authoritarianism is in resurgence in political organisation. Conscious defections from authoritative notions of liberation have made pronounced the extensive shift in political culture, referred to, as the “newest social movements”. This new front, a radical lynchpin of self-directed emancipation, has invoked the theoretical tradition of anarchism as a major touchstone once again.

First in section 1.2, social movements and open-ended everyday tactics are introduced to show the point of origin for my curiosity in how we describe the revolutionary effect of inconclusive present-based action. Secondly in section 1.3, I begin to formulate the significance of these open standpoints within the parameters of historical anarchism. Finally I reflect in sections 1.4 and section 1.5 on how new praxes influence our greater imagination and how conceptualising and emphasising new imaginative inflections can in turn have a feedback effect on more action.

1.2 Social Movements

1.2.1 Prefiguration

The south-eastern area of Chiapas, Mexico came alive with resistance in January 1994 when the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) made a stand that will echo around the world for decades yet to come. The indigenous Mayan people of the Zapatista movement renounced the control of the Mexican government. Without wanting to capture state power they went to war against political representation itself by withdrawing from hierarchical politics and creating autonomous municipalities of their own. The indigenous people of the Lacandon forest had been dispossessed of their resource-rich land and in the new millennium their exploitation persisted as “neo-colonial” (Klein 2002: 4) and neo-liberal statism sanctioned the continued immiseration of the indigenous people through corporate extraction and privatisation of their homelands. Today while encircled by Mexican militia, the 38 autonomous Zapatista municipalities of Chiapas have been progenitive of a global politics of direct action and have not only provided a sociological reference for the newest social movements but have influenced numerous other anti-statist movements since then. The commitment to direct action is defined as:

Empowerment ... [A]bout breaking from dependency on others to run our lives. It is action taken not indirectly by mediators or representatives but directly by those affected ... [A]ction intended to succeed, not just to gain publicity (Carter and Franks 2003; cited in Kinna 2005: 149).

Physical intervention against state power in a form that prefigures an alternative [to it] (Graeber 2002:62).

Often elided in popular media’s usage of the term is that ‘direct action’ is defined by non-representation, that is, where those concerned confront oppression through action that is *unmediated* by any group assuming communicative primacy over the oppressed themselves. Often time’s today direct action occurs as semi-permanent experiments through the prefiguration of alternative communities (exhibiting a more lengthy form) but this is direct action nonetheless. Self-control over one’s own political expression as introduced by direct action precludes the use of party-political and other vertical intermediaries. It is inspired by the belief that for freedom one must aspire to moments which allow for the public fracturing of one’s structural servitude. In

these instants there is no room for the didactic shove of high theory or room for the representation of one's political perspective by another person or clique. As direct action becomes an increasingly important composite of an emerging spirit of resistance, so Marxist theory and its deferral of change via revolutionary vanguards, parties and paternalistic states as a course of anti-domination appears malapropos to contemporary praxis.

Direct action Zapatismo-style is radically egalitarian. There is no class or social group that is privileged with the predetermined right to phrase the terms of the future. Classical Marxism is flagrantly different to this, lacking the ethic of anti-representationalism so vivid in influential movements today. Marx not only supported the exclusive dictatorship of social revolution by one group (the proletariat) but also advocated their control of a centralised post-revolutionary government as outlined in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*:

The first step in the revolution...is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class ... The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class (Marx and Engels 1848; cited in Morris 1993:121).

For classical Marxism the authoritarian urgings for “political supremacy”, “the centralisation of control”, and the “proletariat” as the next “ruling class” contains the assumption that state dictatorship – not its disintegration – should constitute a goal of social movements. This is diametrically opposed to the ethic of prefigurative direct action embedded in the newest social movements. The spirit of Zapatismo is one which seeks to bypass state power not energise it or violently immolate it, but create alternatives to it directly within the present. Zapatismo is “not about winning the state but delegitimizing the state and mechanisms of rule while winning ever larger spaces of autonomy from it” (Graeber and Grubaic 2004: 1).

Contemporary movements have shown a strong conviction towards rendering redundant the image of state as a colossal and feared chimera of automatic authority. In stark contrast to the principles of Marxism, the Zapatistas like many others today, do not want to capture state power but rather to disprove the indefatigability of the state institution by living politically outside of it. A signpost in an autonomous Chiapas municipality reads “You are in Zapatista territory. Here

the people rule and the government obeys” (Ward 2004:17). They do not propose the use of archaic state means to reach egalitarian ends. They construct alternatives within, against and beyond the state.

Richard Day (2005:19) outlines the remit of this approach as assuming one of four general forms: the withdrawal from institutions of domination, subversion through parody, direct confrontation and the prefiguration of alternative societies. The last tactic, prefiguration, the least symbolic and most proactive, is illustrative of an advanced form of direct action which not only includes *acting against* the state through protest but also acting *in spite of* the state through the *prefiguration* of communities using the raw materials of everyday life. Prefiguration is the idea that “transformative social movements must necessarily anticipate the ways and means of the hoped-for new society” (Tokar 2003:3). This seeks neither to simply use nor oppose but actively constructs living alternatives to the present system within the present system. Prefiguration therefore involves the establishment of functional communities autonomous from state power to prefigure the social terms for a freer non-authoritarian future.

The tendency to prefiguration is no small feat. Attempting alternative living arrangements within the oppressive caveats of the present both testifies to the powerful potential of people to realise social, economic and political alternatives but also puts the barriers to such alternatives in real time perspective. This particular tactic of bottom-up transformation – prefigurative politics – notably emerged in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s with Italian *autonomia* and the German *autonomen* (Kastiaficas 2006). Autonomism sought to reconstruct the ‘political’ not as a space of formality but as a derivative of the language and conditions of liberty as phrased by those who seek freedom, and where progressive politics is developed at a distance to authority, effecting a break in the conditions which give rise to its own motive forces. Autonomist movements do not seek recognition from political officials, or any formal conciliation with the very entities that deny freedoms in the first place.

The Zapatistas reignited the spirit of prefigurative autonomism in the twenty-first century. The Zapatistas, as enemies of the state, have against severe odds, developed communal politics which put to shame the inequality of elitist democracy in the urban areas of Mexico. According to Rothschild (2003: 223-228), the Zapatista movement has been the source of self-sufficient

socialised economies consisting of textile-weaving and boot-making, schools, health services and garden projects – all locally controlled. The quiet revolutions of prefiguration are often invalidated as simply “struggles by subtraction” (Cunningham 2010:5). In spite of such dismissals that often “sub-ordinate [the spirit of Zapatismo] to the point of disappearing as an alternative [to the mainstream]” (Marcos 2001:58), the movement and its strong exhibition of prefiguration continues to define the phenomenal intonations of contemporary radical activism.

Many share the desire for life to be freed from the mechanistic doldrums of capitalist society and the non-participation forced upon us daily by hierarchs who are all too willing to decide our lives for us. For this reason the intransigence of the Zapatista’s run in history is edifying. But the extent to which their actual methodology of change has been imbibed by broad society is another question. In societies where revolution has primarily been spoken about in Marxian terms of certainty, hierarchy and scientific pre-emption, people’s passion for change is likely to be smothered between an inbred reliance on objective directions for revolution and the failure of such visions to unshackle life in the past. The ‘habit of certainty’ has desiccated our ability to imagine anything spectacularly new, and has possibly desiccated our wills to act. It has cast the gloomy perception that the future can only be constructed of that which we know to be certain. The idea that ‘the habit of certainty’ has kept secure the very institutions of the past and present from which we seek to move beyond is not particularly complex but greatly unsettling in a society that prides its very function and status on rational objectivity.

This is where the direct action/prefiguration ethic provides respite and inspiration by emphasising that “spontaneous order” (Juris 2009:217) or “conscious spontaneity” (Kastiaficas 2006:18) need not mean aimlessness. As main spokesperson of the Zapatistas, subcommandante Marcos reminds:

The word of the Zapatistas has been well received in other countries ... It has not just been because it is new or novel, but rather because it is proposing this, which is to say, to separate the political problem [society-based] from the problem of taking power [state-based channels], and take it to *another* terrain. Our work is going to end, if it ends, in the construction of this space for *new* political relationships. What follows is going to be a product of the effort – *another* way of thinking and acting (Marcos 1995; quoted in Flood 2011; own emphases).

While appreciation for the Zapatista's end-achievements is surely justified, much is left to be desired in the way of popularising theoretical frameworks which urge the indeterminism of their prefigurative processes as a major bastion of radical political potential and the breaking of the engines of everyday life as an appealing if not more realistic starting point to socialist action than predetermined universal strategies.

Marxism is a definitive and key historical account of socialism. However, its core strategic outlook simply does not reflect the emergent political culture congealing around anti-systemic movements today. If the Marxist canon continues to be regarded as the oppositional discourse for structural equality then we run the risk of betraying and not fulfilling our duty towards the unique credibility of rebellion's character in our time. Deterministic classical Marxism and its fixed idea of progress where every society passes through a series of stages towards socialism (Miller 1984: 79) undermines the revolutionary spontaneity possible and present in different societies and overlooks the importance of direct action/prefiguration – key to today's anti-capitalist lexicon. Historically, we have also acquired in the twenty-first century a memory of what socialism under the aegis of Marxism looks like; images which now bear grimly on the potential of Marxist-Leninism in practice. And what remains of actually existing Marxist alternatives today in forms like social-liberal governments and trade-unionism as its most popular instantiations offer only moderate and cold variations within the system, not radical alternatives to it.

Changing conditions on the ground therefore beggars a turning point in old beliefs that authoritarian instrumentalism would lead us to 'The' successful 'Revolution'. We are fortunate that the waning influence of old conceptual frameworks is accompanied by the work of heresies like the Zapatistas who offer us something different in how they "avoid polemics with the many vanguards and safeguards of The [capital R] Revolution" (Marcos 1995:17 quoted in Holloway 1997:3). I think the current interregnum between the objectivism of old socialism and the subjectivism of the contemporary movements provides exciting inversions which will not solve but will surely enrich and reawaken responses to "how is revolution to be achieved?" and "via which avenues can theory reflect this?".

Marxism tended to centralise truth claims about revolutionary agency. When this happens vanguards more powerful than the source of demand (for social change) tend to emerge as a

conduit between the oppressed and the centre of so-called truth. It is herein argued, that when truth claims are *decentralised* then revolution does not occur with the achievement of some grand plan, but in the concrete experience of self-management itself, “when the organisation of the action is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about” (Graeber 2009:221-222). South Africa’s autonomous exemplar *Abahlali baseMjondolo*, like the Zapatistas, have largely discarded the structural consequentialism of antiquated socialist theory by organising themselves in such a way as to articulate through praxis “the construction of autonomous structures within civil society as a [small “r”] end in itself” (Baker 2002 :132).

1.2.2 Direct Democracy

Similar in spirit to the Zapatistas is the shackdwellers movement *Abahlali baseMjondolo* in South Africa. In the seventeen years since the end of Apartheid, citizens have borne witness to the intensification of economic growth alongside the growing disenfranchisement of ordinary South Africans – a routine outcome for neo-liberal capitalism. Increasing unemployment and inequality rates, increases in precarious employment and a decrease in life expectancy are but a few of the additions that post-Apartheid neo-liberal rule has made to the worsening debris that is South Africa’s poor and forgotten peripheries (Seekings 2007). The South African constitution, lauded globally for its progressiveness, remains an all but bitter reminder to South Africa’s poor of the merely incremental shifts made towards a participatory society over a nearly twenty-year period while the world continues to celebrate the sophism of post-1994 South African inclusivity. The new regime, run by the political party that once spearheaded resistance to Apartheid, has betrayed the historically dispossessed by explicitly prioritising persistent inequality qua free-market development policies. A party once celebrated for its morality has as soon become a principle of violence against the destitute since assuming state power.

In early 2005, the largest and most militant radical movement in contemporary South Africa, *Abahlali baseMjondolo* (meaning in isiZulu “people who live in shacks”) emerged to protest forced evictions in the squatter camps of South Africa’s Kwazulu-Natal province (Pithouse 2006a). Today *Abahlali* consists of more than 30 settlements with tens of thousands of supporters and embraces an eclectic mix of social justice issues carried out through a direct action politics of situated autonomy. To date *Abahlali baseMojondolo* have self-run sewing, garden and crèche collectives. Like the Zapatistas they have made a strong stand as the

engenderers of an organic living politics imbricated with daily life, as spokesperson S'buZikode (2006:3; 2007:4) points out: "Our struggle is thought in action and it is thought from the ground. We define ourselves and our struggle". He adds: "As much as all debates are good...we need to strengthen our muscles for an action debate that is a living debate that does not only end on theories". Inherent in their expressed rejection of statist interpretations of social change, *Abahlali* like the Zapatistas have taken it upon themselves to prefigure radically democratic horizontalism within their communities as a living alternative to autocratic social relations through the establishment of federalised decentralised municipal structures independent from the state and the logic of capital (Gibson 2010).

Reclaiming personal political power from representation to everyday life attributes an organisational distinctiveness to contemporary autonomous movements. Self-government has rendered the activities of these movements as hermeneutical spaces for egalitarianism as they seek to "fully democratise the internal governance of all settlements" (Abahlali 2006:5). In their struggle to realise systems free from domination they have become exciting social laboratories. The desire for direct control of local environments means that leadership is critiqued not only as an external phenomenon in the form of the state or grand theory for example, but also in terms of the internal power relations of the social movements themselves, treating very reflexively the question of internal leadership including its nature, constitution and necessity. This signifies another major detour from traditional socialist thought, as they place the burden of activity on individuals and not representatives.

Autonomous movements catapult the trying notion that "states cannot by their nature, ever truly be democratized" (Graeber 2007a: 365) and therefore "democracy is only relevant in the non-state form" (Badiou 2005: 85) so that the veritable achievement of democracy is rendered a radical goal. With face-to-face democracy, there is seldom a chance to impose top-down 'policy' as people are disinclined in these settings to believe that some form of elites know better than they how their affairs are to be conducted (Graeber 2004a:3). Reflected by their slogan, "Talk to us, not for us", *Abahlali's* (like the Zapatista's) democratic processes include open weekly forums where consensus processes are given preference to voting, rotational leadership, confederations of decentralised independent settlements and the withdrawal from electoral politics.

Marxists reject market-led industrialisation and bourgeois democracy but they do not reject hierarchy itself. By the understanding of dictatorship as unfavourable only in the capitalist form but acceptable in the proletariat form, the replacement of one hegemony by another is promoted by traditional Marxism. This is depicted by Lenin's dictum which shows an un-mindfulness of paternalism as anything other than good:

Marxism teaches...that *only* the political party of the working class i.e., the Communist Party, is capable of uniting, training, and organizing *a vanguard* of the proletariat and of the whole mass of the working people...*and of guiding all the united activities of the whole proletariat*, i.e., of leading it politically, and through it, *the whole mass* of the working people (Lenin 1921:327 quoted in Antliff 2007: 63; own emphases).

This uncritical view of using even temporarily paternalistic forms of leadership significantly departs from the inventiveness of contemporary anti-capitalists who consciously scrutinize the anti-egalitarian incentive of legitimized authority within movements. Contra to Marxist-Leninist strategy, *Abahlali* has mandated a commitment to leadership "from the base" (Patel 2006:14) as exemplified by the official statement:

We are for a living communism. We are for a communism that emerges from the struggles of ordinary people and which is shaped and owned by ordinary people. Any entity that declares from above that it is the vanguard of the people's struggles and that the people must therefore accept their authority is the enemy of the people's struggles. Leadership is earned and is never permanent. It can never be declared from above (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2010).

The anti-vanguardism practised by today's radical movements is experimental – it aims to abstract the state from democracy. It would be facile to think that the withdrawal from state forms by movements like *Abahlali* is carried forth with an intention to pretend naively that the existing state no longer exists. When we say that movements abstract statist relations from democracy, it is not a portrait of their denial of the pervasiveness of institutional relations built around the notion of State; rather, it depicts a denunciation of that system of relations even though it is pervasive, through experimentations with self-decision.. To borrow from Todd May (1994: 113) a definition on 'experimentation': "Experimentation is the activity of trying out

something else, something that may get one free of the feeling of necessity and ineluctability that attaches to the practices one has been brought up on". Prefiguration therefore attempts to open up spaces of possible transformation away from the state; this involves not working towards a fixed programme of transformation and therein standing apart from traditional theory.

By following the expressions of struggle by *Abahlali baseMjondolo*, it becomes clear that an address of "How to..?" should take seriously the ways in which theoretical enclosures affect the scope of self-driven change. Theories which make centralised truth-claims treat revolution like a predetermined goal "that lies over some never reached horizon but which serves to legitimate the power to order the line of march now" (Pithouse 2006b:8). Pre-emptively defined and enclosed subjectivities, paths and outcomes limit the perceived substantiveness of imaginings borne from the present.

1.2.3 Anti-authoritarian Experimentation

Old revolutionary fiats are no more unforthcoming than when it comes to an embrace of experimentation. Because quotidian space is viewed as the site of radical politics today, socialism must be viewed as a supposition of practical experimentation. Closed ended theories cannot satisfy this because they like formal politics impose discipline on dissent.

Prefiguration has resisted the suturing of bottom up intelligence with the professionalised discourse of political pundits. No longer willing to heel to pragmatism as dictated by elites, contemporary movements have imbued creativity as the suppressed impulse of rationalised orders. One of the most important inflective features of influential movements has been a particular focus on the radical distortion of public space through the creation of effervescent moments of communalism. The watershed from old labour-based organisation to the organised spontaneity of movements using humour, parody and art as instruments of protest is monumental. This rearticulates the desire for freedom to include ecstatic connection and joy with others – no longer restricted to an instrumental end as dictated by economistic interpretations of change. Liberation in this sense suggests that people struggle for material resources in order to live with choice and creativity – the emphasis shifted from the material acquisition of equality – to what is ultimately desired from it, the capacity to *live*. By giving creativity a central place in resistance allows for us to reinterpret why we seek the eradication of poverty and inequality, to

improve the entirety of social space and inner life, a pursuit of “bread, butter *and roses*” (Millstein 2010:67; own emphasis). By injecting a strong experiential component into definitions of emancipation the instrumental reductionism of human emancipation is defied.

Reclaim the Streets, a London-based collective which has now found chapters across the world, organises spontaneous public street parties which block major highways, subverting the perceived colossality of order in Britain’s public spaces. This type of “protestival” is inspired by situationism which defined the historic Paris 1968 uprising where “a euphoric subjective experience championed something radically different to the dull, profane experience of modern life” (Grindon 2007:95). When jubilation and spiritedness are made coextensive with liberation, technicist notions of reality, socialism and their safeguards seem more dubious.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army in one instance carried fake guns and invaded the Mexican military to shame soldiers by scolding them for their role in oppression, and then leaving the base without any violence – calling the bluff of ‘sacred’ power (Graeber 2002). Politics is part of the Zapatista’s way of being; it is part of their daily attempt to occupy the ‘other world’; it is informal, often times amusing but always relevant. Such proud colloquialism in politics alters the terms of engagement, by shifting the criteria of political impactfulness from parliamentary officialdom to ordinary people occupying everyday spaces. Whenever we allow our political impulses to depend on order to achieve the ‘correct’ political expression we are re-enacting the senseless and undignified self-constraint which makes possible the arbitration of a repressive state in our lives. So when a “Do-It-Yourself” direct action politics (Shantz 2010) celebrates spontaneity, it enables on-the-ground expression to find its own dignity. So while ‘carnival’, ‘spectacle’ and ‘experimentation’ may be seen as mere token protests, they have become harbingers of a subsequent turn in politics away from modernistic rigour towards postmodern openness (Harvey 1989:38).

Reconstituting old forms of ‘political expression’ is integral to any radical praxis which seeks not only to be heard above, but to be present in the parlance of on the ground perceptibility. The most oft-cited incarnation of the anti-authoritarianism of the twenty-first century is the “movement of movements” (Curran 2006:3) otherwise known as the anti-globalisation movement, associated most strongly with the organising groups, the Peoples Global Action and the Zapatistas. In 1994 and 1997 the Zapatistas hosted two *encuentros* “For Humanity and

Against Neoliberalism". What emerged from these encounters was a loosely built network of organisations called the People's Global Action (PGA). PGA "explicitly rejected the participation of political parties or any group whose purpose was to become government" whilst experimenting with autonomous politics of "non-violent direct action" (Graeber 2009: xiii). It promulgated the direct action, democratic experimentation and autonomist communalism herein identified as markers of the new radicalism. Soon after hosting the "Carnival against Capitalism" from Australia to Zimbabwe (Graeber 2009: xiii-xiv), the world famous "Battle of Seattle" took place where the PGA descended on Washington DC to stop the World Trade Organisation meeting in 1999. By the sheer creativity of thousands of protesters from different organisations and different walks of life, the WTO meeting was stopped and the very existence of the WTO brought into question. It was a colourful victory for the PGA who used tactics like the Clandestine Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) – police harassment through tickling – and the anarchist People's Golfing Association (PGA) – police harassment through golfing (Curran 2006:1) .

According to Graeber (2009: 207), who participated in the protests, the shutting down of the WTO was a victory for prefigurative action by thousands of people acting as if they were already free. Richard Day (2005:34) reminds that capital "R" revolution which seeks a sudden collapse of existing structures is not desirable, as human-beings socialised into domination over centuries are likely to seek out new masters should rupture occur suddenly. Achieving anti-authoritarianism requires gradual change through momentary and experimental everyday prefigurations of "other ways of being" so as to recreate social structures from the inside out. Stephanie Guilloud an activist involved in the Battle of Seattle reiterates the prefigurative momentum of the events: "In the streets, we relied upon trust and consensus to make our quick decisions about how to respond to tear gas and where to move next. Our process embodied the non-hierarchical vision we were looking to realise" (Guilloud 2001: 226).

It is clear that emergent politics of anti-capitalism identifies its concerns with socio-cultural interactions as much as with material concerns. A politics which identifies struggle with notions of becoming, creativity and expression (Kinna 2005: 74) compels us to engage more with the political meaning of immediate experience in terms of emancipation. A communism which stresses the vibrancy and radicalism of in-deterministic activity is one which is not susceptible to

the monastism and ascetism of orthodoxy. Young revolutionaries today are quick to abjure the eschatological tendencies of old, as *The Invisible Committee* opines:

The past has given us too many bad answers for us not to see that the mistakes were in the questions themselves. There is no need to choose between....acting desperately now and waiting desperately for later; between bracketing that which is to be lived and experimented in the name of a paradise that seems more and more like a hell the longer it is put off (Anon 2007: 14-15).

Becoming autonomous, could just as easily mean learning to fight in the streets, to occupy empty houses, to cease working and to love each other madly ... Things are changing, it's true (Anon 2007: 42-43).

With the swing of the evocative and the insistence on immediatism it is clear that insurgent rhetoric today and its grasp of "What is to be done...?" can no longer be grafted onto traditional theories which overlook the spontaneity of events for scientific eventuality. What detractors may call 'tactical frivolity' I believe marks something more significant, which is, the ineluctable capacity for creativity in resistance and the urge for "otherness". The fruits of this is likely to one day be normalised, but now in this time exists uncategorised in its varieties of question allowing momentarily for the decomposition of existing forms. It is the production of the unexpected after all which has kept communitarian activity alive. Otherness is always outside and cannot be contained by any totalising theoretical knowledge (Grindon 2007:96). Without a constant drive towards 'otherness', subsequent associations with feminism, ecology, race and now autonomism may not have congealed so as to renew socialism's relevance over time.

The movements herein mentioned are dissimilar in many ways from one another but what makes them distinct together is the manner in which their militant reclamation of quotidian space has had a symbolic reverberation which is now reaching into theory. While specific contexts naturally inform the degree of flamboyance and artistry employed, even autonomist movements which are mainly instrumental and materialist in their focuses have still within their withdrawal from formal politics forwarded the idea that personal communal experience is the most important space of emancipation and not simply bureaucratic institutional change. The ultimate image of revolution is being cast in the light of everyday life.

Contemporary tactics break with the assumption that for transformative interventions to be effective they need to be transmutable to the functional logic of the system. To judge the relevance of social interventions focused at transforming quotidian spaces based primarily on the potential for translation into a formal politics of decree, voting and mandates is to miss the point – it is to assume that the seeming unicity of technocratic politics covers entire the scope of democracy. It does not. The language of transformation which drives the technocratic dimension of change is largely borne of the survival and need for the continued management of the system, not for its revolutionisation. Transformation as suggested by a technocratic logic is secured outside of quotidian space. When we allow the validity of our cultural challenges to the system to be measured by system-biased standards of instrumentality it shows what Newman (2007: 228) calls the “ultimate incompatibility between the collective autonomy at the heart of democracy and the principle of state sovereignty which embodies exception”. The solicitation of movements today questions why people on the ground should ascribe their personal political energies to prosaic managerialist style politics alien to their daily experiences, especially when managerialist politics is so abjectly directed against their interests and those of the environment.

Their promotion of everyday life/quotidian space politics is achieved by occupying the space of the present – the indeterminate immediate, the personal – a terrain of politics which is often expected to be benign in order for lifeless politics to take ‘expert’ status to the real. In spite of the supposed stability and oft-forwarded shibboleths of parliamentary edifices, democracy as Claude Lefort says has always been more in line with experimentation than we are led to believe:

Democratic society seems to me, in fact, like a society in which power, law and knowledge are exposed to a radical indeterminism, a society that has become the theatre of an uncontrollable adventure, so that what is instituted never becomes established, the known remains undermined by the unknown (Lefort 1986: 305).

The goal of radical activism has thus shifted dramatically from the disciplinarian to the experimental. Speaking of the prescience of May 1968’s situationism relative to the present-day, Kristin Ross remarks on the symbolic power of culturally-based resistance:

When the political imaginary becomes the everyday fabric of people’s lives.... What can be gleaned...is what Henri Lefebvre meant when he spoke of “transformed

everydayness”: the creation of a culture that is not an institution but a way of life, reproducing for a time its own conditions in the activity of a group taking its role and its social life in hand. Political activity no longer appears as a distinct and separate sphere isolated from social life: each person may, there where he or she lives and works, prepare the birth of another future. Specialization – the “natural” domain of experts – is based on the separation of spheres; here, the social has been reconfigured to eliminate such a separation, to refuse naturalized categories of expertise (Ross 2002: 145-146).

Actually existing movements provide a critical contrast to the unified nature of strategies maintained by dogmatic left theory and the social systems built in its name. According to Kastiaficas (2006), for the authoritarian radicals of the past their “best efforts have only strengthened the engines of government” through their straitjacketing of bottom-up dissent by authoritarian reason (Kastiaficas 2006: 231). Not to overstate the asceticism of Marxist theory itself, but in its most popular exegetical image, notions of joy, creativity and diversity are not characteristic of the Marxist imaginary. The organisations and societies which came to eclipse Marxist communism with their putative manifestations thereof greatly inhibited individual liberty for the sake of preserving centralised power. Marxist theory can be seen as precursive to soviet communism with its insistence on the “correct way” for insurrection to occur. Where Marxism depicts transformation by an instrumental undoing of society, it leaves human experience and aesthetics very little role to play in the perceived content of social revolution. A first-hand account by rebels against the Marxist-communist regime in Russia titled “*Socialism in quotation marks*” shows the depravity of a socialist project which denies the affective elements which constitute liberty:

(While state power grew) the life of the citizen became hopelessly monotonous and routine. One lived according to timetables established by the powers that be. Instead of the free development of the individual personality and a free labouring life, there emerged an extraordinary and unprecedented slavery ... Such is the shining kingdom of socialism to which the dictatorship of the Communist Party has brought us (Avrich 1921, quoted in Antliff 2007: 64).

Therefore at the turn of the twentieth century the role of spontaneous experimentation was not regarded an obvious or necessary composite of emancipatory theory. In fact, the imaginative

ethic itself may have been totally sidelined as a consideration in anti-systemic theory; as Grindon (2007:101) reflects, “more orthodox strains of Marxism would no doubt see such approaches as nothing more than bare-faced utopianism”. In the crucible of the twenty-first century however the intellectual milieu is altering. The notion of the utopian imaginary is not one which is overlooked, at worst it is slighted as tricky, and at best it is generative of new revolutionary questions. What can be said is that the most striking practices of radicalism today render mendacious any political education or field of theory which demands servitude from the agents of change so that some proprietary claim of revolution applied across an entire geographical space can be leveraged. False universality in theory is being increasingly exposed as social movements distinguish themselves on-the-ground against the austere rationality of past theory for presuppositions of autonomy which are simultaneously passionate, intelligent and unexpected and grounded within specific spaces, culture and daily life.

This brings us back to the goal of this chapter which is to identify theoretically convergent tendencies in tactical movements so as to sketch a social movement-based background to the main thrust of the thesis which is the theoretical rehabilitation of old objectivist conceptions of revolution. I highlight uniformities within these movements in order to justify orientations in subversive political culture which are no longer sufficiently accommodated by classical Marxist ideas; these are presented as: prefiguration (direct action), direct democracy and experimentalism.

I do not presume that the movements used to illustrate these tendencies are operationally identical, but that they are similar in their animating principles. I also do not wish to connote a false and total caesura with the contradictions of power by depicting the application of these principles as pure and consistent. My interest in the broad principles associated with these movements is expressed with full acknowledgment of the often paradoxical relations on the ground. My intention is to demonstrate that these movements strategically defect from historically entrenched depictions of theoretical anti-systemism. And I hold that – real world complexities considered – they have contributed to a new epoch in socialist utopianism. This introductory perusal of social movements provides a brief cross-section of the type of praxis which informs the theoretical conjectures in subsequent chapters.

It is salutary to note that the *Zapatistas*, *Abahlali*, People's Global Action and the Occupy movements are but examples of a worldwide trend in directly democratic movements which are not vying for state power, political party affiliation or corporate benefit but are constructing anti-hierarchical societies within the interstices of archaic society. While I use specific case studies to respectively highlight the three main features of direct action, direct democracy and creativity – this is done for stylistic purposes only – in reality they jointly exhibit varying combinations of these three tenets. I have hitherto alleged that these orientations shade radical reasonability today and are indicative of a process of substitution which conventional Marxist categories and concepts are undergoing. But the conviction inherent in new political and cultural modes that “conditions have altered so radically in the course of the twentieth century that traditional schools of thought...have become antiquated” points not only to the attenuation of Marxist strategy, but to the revival of previously sidelined perspectives on socialism, now rendered pertinent in present-day conditions (Kinna 2005: 21).

I will endorse the observation made by a number of scholars that the cusp of contemporary radicalism and its rejection of formal politics, messianic tactics and top-down theories echo principles of libertarian socialism sufficiently to warrant designating the newest social movements as “anarchistic”. The panorama of social movement developments underway have not only abjured Marxist revolutionary claims but have reacquainted Marxism with a long-time theoretical adversary too. A diverse coterie of scholars have observed that the driving energy of anti-institutional arrangements around the world appear to reflect the culture and philosophy of anarchism far more than they do Marxism (Curran 2006; Gautney 2009; Graeber 2002; Gordon 2009; Newman 2011). The belief in these quarters is that anarchism is the hidden historical referent for Copernican forms of emancipation in our time. For centuries anarchists have warned of the trappings of vanguardism in radical politics and they have responded by providing non-authoritarian alternatives for activism. The newest movements are similar in both respects.

1.3 Anarchist practice

Anarchism arose as part of the worldwide socialist movement in the nineteenth century³. It was not really considered a social movement until the appearance of the Russian, Mikhail Bakunin, who in the mid-1800s established himself as the most revered figure in revolutionary anarchism (Mbah and Igariewey 1997:1, 13-14). Anarchism is historically a Western theory⁴. Grubaic 2003: 36-37) sees it as emerging historically in three phases. The first phase of anarchism was shaped by late 19th century class struggles in Europe and influenced by the Bakunin faction in the First International; this peaked with the Paris Commune (1871) and dwindled through the 1880s. The second phase from the 1890s is identified with Eastern Europe and Peter Kropotkin's theories of anarcho-communism, peaking during the Russian Revolution and continuing after as a Central European undercurrent. The third phase, from the 1920s to the late 1940s, was less agrarian than previous phases and focused on anarchist trade union organisation or anarcho-syndicalism in Central and Western Europe.

Anarchism is the belief that life can be lived harmoniously through voluntarily organised groups without centralised authority. The hallmark internal to anarchism which has typified its distinction from other similar categories is its focus on free individual will as a function of socialism. Its resistance to the sub-ordination of the individual spared no other form of socialism. Anarchists believed that communists who advocated the collective unit over the individual played as grievous a role in preventing the achievement of equalities as the capitalists who paid no heed to the communal good. Individual liberty cannot be sacrificed to the controls of 'the community' because "freedom without equality means the poor and weak are less strong than the rich *but equality without freedom means that we are all slaves together*" (Ehrlich 1979:43; own emphasis). The existential core of anarchism therefore is the pursuit of the individual's intrinsic worth within non-hierarchical arrangements (Jennings 1999:132-133). In the broadest sense anarchism is a critique of all sovereign political authority, including:

³ Gustav Landauer wrote in *For Socialism* (1978/1911:9,44) that "socialism is not the socialization of the means of production under the dictatorship of the proletariat ... Socialism is the tendency of will of unified men to create something new for the sake of an ideal. Socialism is a cultural movement, a struggle for beauty, greatness, abundance of the peoples".

⁴ Africa only came into contact with anarchism as a systematic body of knowledge in the late twentieth century, with the exception of South Africa. See, van der Walt (2011).

All centralised and hierarchical forms of government (e.g., monarchy, representative democracy, state socialism etc), economic class systems (e.g., capitalism, Bolshevism, feudalism, slavery, etc), autocratic relations (e.g. Roman Catholicism, fundamentalist Islam, etc), patriarchy, heterosexism, white supremacy, and imperialism (Jun 2008:171).

In anarchist writings the central focuses of critique have been the state and quasi-state forms, a rejection of capitalism and an interest in the practical limits of self-determination. Anarchism is referred to by Eric Hobsbawm as the “libertarian tradition of communism” (Clark 2007:6). It is a tradition which has been defined by very many, but wholly encompassed by very few. The diverse forms which contain its political principles make pinning it down implacably hard. Violent, passivist, sacral, atheist, activist, philosophical, anarcho-syndicalist, anarchist communist, American, European, non-Western, classical and post-structuralist forms, have forced the likes of Andrej Grubaic (2003:35) to conclude that “anarchism is a tendency in the history of human thought and practice, which cannot be encompassed by a general theory of ideology”. While we may muse about whether “many anarchism’s share little but the name” (Clark 2007:7), there is also reason to believe that an “anarchist invariant” is present. To Saul Newman (2010b:2), this “anarchist invariant” which binds the anarchist system of knowledge together is “the recurring desire for life without government that haunts the political imagination”. Therefore its divisions are ultimately bound together by a shared aim: “The ultimate aim is the reduction of the functions of government to nil – [that] is, to a society without government, to Anarchy” (Kropotkin 1987:23).

Communitarian movements defining radicalism in the past decade have encapsulated many core principles which have made anarchism an alternative to both Marxism and capitalism for almost two centuries. Anarchism is a rich body of thought deeply embedded in the practical and intellectual history of global social revolt. It has had sparse relief from bad press and derogation over its lifespan. The fact that new movements may potentially provide a twenty-first century repository for its ideas drives the kind of optimistic incitement that finally the “anarchist century” is upon us (Graeber 2004b:4). What is more is that the general non-violent nature of new movements allows the identification of contemporary anarchism to oppose incorrect associations of anarchism with social disfiguration and chaos. To illustrate the parallels between

anarchist practice and emergent radicalism I will show how the principles heretofore defined as emblematic of new movements are in fact fundamental to anarchist thought.

1.3.1 Anarchism and prefiguration

Early anarchist intellectuals Mikhail Bakunin, Prince Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus and Gustav Landauer make up a small part of the coterie of celebrated classical anarchists. Since the early 19th century anarchism has grown as an alternative belief system to capitalist reality and its communist alternatives. In the First Socialist International Karl Marx took such exception to the competing ideas of anarchism that he succeeded in expelling the forebear of revolutionary anarchism Mikhail Bakunin from the international. Bakunin's problematisation of all hierarchy was incommensurable and audacious in light of Marx's unequivocal call for vanguardism. By the time the Third International came into being, the dissenting elements of the anarchist challenge had been so significantly removed from mainstream socialist discourse that the overriding agendas of the international centred on decidedly paternalistic issues such as the German Socialist Democratic Party and other centralist politics. And for the many decades after that initial confrontation, anarchism's problematisation of hierarchy was not treated as central to the socialist problematique, with the prophetic rejection of the state as a viable avenue for revolution cast away in the bad distortion of its meaning; eventually to become so misunderstood as to be a synonym for ruination.

Marxism and anarchism share many of the same goals; they are both aligned against capitalist society and the disappearance of the state as a repressive institution, the end of class-rule and the creation of a socialist economy (Morris 1993: 117). However, they are fundamentally distinct in their conceptualisation of the means to such transformation. Marxism was once the preponderant approach to anti-capitalism, still evidenced by its eminence within the academy and the polyvalence of its large support-base and the forms which have emerged in its name over time and still exist today. But this is changing. What was once regarded only as a secondary contradiction in socialism, that is, the use of hierarchy as a means to equality, has now garnered renewed attention with the advent of the prefigurative emphases in radical movements. To reiterate, prefiguration is a strategy which evokes through experimental action, an "embryonic representation of an alternative social future" (Carter and Morland 2004: 79) so that "the very process of building the movement from below is viewed as the process of consociation, self-

activity and self-management that must ultimately yield that revolutionary self that can act upon, change and manage an authentic society” (Bookchin 1980:6). It is a tactic which sees revolution as the process of creating egalitarian relations within the present as opposed to the use of authoritarian means to reach an end-point in the distant future.

The moments of revolution created by the Zapatista movement, *Abahlali*, Reclaim the Streets and Occupy Wall Street do not satisfy the completion of an *a priori* capital “R” agenda. Classical “R” notions in fact detract our attention from the type of revolutionary changes happening daily in the interstices of society. Alternative modes of being and experimentation which survive within the gaps of the dominant social logic constitute an area of radicalism and suggest that piecemeal change may indeed under certain circumstance be potentially revolutionary. When reviewing the meaning of revolution today, it becomes quite clear that the autonomous exemplars of contemporary society exhibit a form of revolution which is not captured by *a priori* objectivist notions, but by prefigurative notions of social change.

Anarchism provides a philosophical and political reference point for prefiguration because:

[Anarchism has]...always rejected the view that socialism could be created from above. Its rejection of capitalism is part of a broader opposition to hierarchy in general and part of a larger understanding of the freedom and development of the individual as the aim of socialism (van der Walt and Schmidt 2009: 25).

And therefore

The means employed become, through individual habit and social practice, part and parcel of the final purpose; they influence it, modify, and presently the aims and means become identical ...[T]he ethical values which the revolution is to establish in the new society must be initiated with the revolutionary activities themselves (Goldman 1925, quoted in Gordon 2008: 37).

Prefiguration cannot be affiliated with classical Marxism, which defined its very outlook with a self-conscious authoritarianism, denying everyday self-determination as composite of either the instruments or thinking around freedom. Rather Marxism institutionalised self-negation as a necessity for transition to another world. For a century Marxist ideals defined the scope and tenor

of an alternative political imaginary, an imaginary which largely abandoned the notion of self-determination. Their approach to freedom focused on two overwhelmingly authoritarian slants.

First of all there was the conviction that a “centralised organisation of force, of violence” and “undivided power” in the form of a vanguard party and state was necessary for revolutionary change (Marx 1875; Lenin 1917 quoted in van der Walt and Schmidt 2009:99). Classical anarchists insisted they were wrong, imploring that the state “having been the force to which the minorities resorted for establishing and organising their power over the masses, cannot be the force which will serve to destroy those privileges” (Kropotkin 1912: 170).

Second there were the vainglorious exultations of their own theory as one of “objective necessity” (Trotsky 1975 quoted in van der Walt and Schmidt 2009: 25), thereby claiming the sole right for their singular set of ideas to lead the masses as evidenced by Friedrich Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The Communists are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties over every country... [O]n the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

This objectivist determinism and natural reliance on state power in Marxism separated the desire for equality from the revolutionary process steeped in authority. Anarchists have historically taken issue with the incommensurability of Marxism’s means and ends – one cannot build a revolutionary movement along authoritarian principles and expect that these will not reflect in the results. Prefigurative politics is strongly attached to anarchistic strategic priorities: if the self-determination of one’s life and the self-management of polity are goals then they must be prepared for in the present and prefigured in all the processes enacted in the name of change. In general, anarchists have believed that contra Marx, the groundwork of equality cannot be deferred to ‘after the revolution’ once the top-down authoritarianism used for revolution has finally “withered away” (Adamiak 1970). Almost one hundred years ago, the anarchist Gustav Landauer explained the revolutionary potential of prefiguration eloquently when he famously said:

One can throw away a chair and destroy a pane of glass; but...[only] idle talkers...regard the state as such a thing or as a fetish that one can smash in order to destroy it. The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behaviour between men; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another...We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society (Landauer 2010 :226).

1.3.2 Anarchism and direct democracy

As discussed, emblematic autonomous communities today view internal leadership very cautiously so as not to reiterate the indefatigability of top-down political relations. Because delegates within autonomous communities are not protected by the power of state or political party they are highly accountable to communities and therefore subject to recall at any time. Through the setting up of directly democratic community councils, consensus decision-making and rotational leadership they attempt internal power relations which prefigure democracy.

Anarchists throughout history have theorised extensively about how social administration can be applied without hierarchical structures. Anarchism literally means *society* without *arkhos*, that is, without rulership. Spanish anarchist Lluna Pujols as far back as 1882 describes how egalitarianism is functional only in a society where

The only indispensable function in the collective body is that of administration, not of rule ... The persons (administrators) subject to replacement and recall at any time through the ongoing suffrage of those who have given them their mandates, could never set themselves up as dictators (Pujols 1882 quoted in Graham 2005: 126).

To the anarchist Herbert Read (1941), the acceptance of the non-role of authoritarianism in democracy would promote the improved functioning of society. He argued that “since the functional groups will all be working for their mutual benefit, and not for the other peoples profit or for mutual destruction, the measure of efficacy will be the appetite for the fullness of living” (Read 1941:10).

Mikhail Bakunin from the beginning criticized the way in which Marx and his followers centralised authority in the revolutionary struggle in the form of a proletariat dictatorship. As the

dictum “he who rides in the chariot will never be the friend of the one who goes on foot” (Graham 2005:132) forwards, so Bakunin believed that Marxists as the self-anointed “prophets of political and social discipline, champions of an order built from the top-down” (Bakunin 1872 quoted in Marshall 1993: 30) could never provide the makings for an egalitarian society. A “dictatorship has no objective other than self-preservation” wrote Bakunin, and “slavery is all that it can generate and instil in the people who suffer from it” (Bakunin 1870 quoted in van der Walt and Schmidt 2009:100). For anarchists the social relations central to revolutionary organisation had to reflect the freedoms vied for in the end. Therefore any sovereign leadership was counter-revolutionary for there would be “those who ruled and those that were slaves” (Shatz 2002:330). Vanguardism always prefigures paternalism, not democracy.

Radically direct democracy is a common ideal of anarchist praxis⁵. It can be understood as the ideal of horizontal accountability, in a non-authoritarian society where decision-making structures are consensual and any form of political domination is illegitimate. Anarchism is not the assertion that administrative expertise is bad but that it is coercive when applied in hierarchical settings, that is, where the divide between the leaders and those being led is glaring. The contrast between this radical democracy and the forms which we take for ‘democracy’ today is one which leads Saul Newman’s (2008: 234) view that ‘political equality, if taken seriously and understood radically, can only mean the abolition of statist sovereignty’. Anarchism is an appeal for the burden of proof to be passed to partisans of bureaucratic modes of change, for them to show that authoritarian forms of democracy have anything to do with true political equality at all. It parallels remarkably with autonomous movements of our time.

1.3.3 Anarchism and experimentation

For anarchism the perceived strictures of authoritarian revolution go against their definitive belief that a respect for individualism is attendant to a working socialism. Anarchists are individualists and communitarians as Emma Goldman puts forward: “There is no fundamental conflict between the individual and the social instincts, any more than there is between the heart

⁵ Uri Gordon (2009:174-178) debates how well the ideas of anarchism and democracy can be married. For him, consensus-based processes, deliberation, participation and all similar aspects do not amount to anarchism if the final decisions are binding – it is just a form of “soft majoritarianism”. For van der Walt and Schmidt (2009), direct democracy is emblematic of anarchist practice.

and the lungs” (Goldman [nd]:4). This distinguishes anarchism from both Marxism and bourgeois liberalism. With Marxism individuality stands in contradiction to collectivism and therefore emancipation is believed only to occur with the collective movement of a whole society. At the polar extreme is liberalism occupying the view that society is the sum of atomic individuals with no substantial regard for the notion of community.

However, anything regarded as truly anarchist makes concessions for both communalism and individualism. Anarchists believe freedom to truly occur when individual independence is actualised within a context of communal sociability. The importance of individual innovation within socialism is communicated by the anarchist’s focus on voluntary association which is “the free ability of individuals to associate with, or disassociate from, whomever they choose” (Jun 2010: 199). Unless people can claim and articulate their own personal and visceral wills to transcend a given order, freedom cannot be achieved. And so theories like Marxism which relies on mass servitude is according to Bakunin “devoid of any sense of personal dignity” (Bakunin 1866:4). The freedom for individual association around ideas of anti-capitalism must be allowed to emanate from personal life as Bakunin (1974: 206-207) points out: “The life-giving order of freedom must be made solely from the bottom upwards ... Only individuals, united through mutual aid and voluntary association, are entitled to decide who they are, what they shall be, and how they shall live”. Personal expressiveness in struggle is integral to the revolutionary tradition of anarchism. The anarchist, according to Bakunin, “insists on his positive rights to life and all of its intellectual, moral and physical joys” because “he loves life and wants to enjoy it in all of its abundance” (van der Walt and Schmidt 2009:47). This is very different to the ossification of individual desire found in Marxism.

This respect for the individual attests to the prioritisation of face-to-face democracy, but more fundamentally for the personal to factor into deliberative political spaces. This opens up the terrain of politics to the dynamism of ordinary life, a vitality which cannot be contained by theories proclaiming objectivity. Anarchists have long celebrated the tension between individual and collective change as productive, as is clear from the anarcho-socialist Emma Goldman when she wrote: “The one thing of value in the world, is the active soul; this every person contains ... [T]he active soul sees truth, utters truth and *creates*...” (Goldman[n.d] : 4; own emphasis).

From the crucibles of time, human beings have pursued means by which to explain collective desires to eliminate unnecessary suffering of some at the behest and for the benefit of others. We have sought through the years to decipher how we may fundamentally alter the never-ending momentum of domination; we have tried to figure out how we may overcome privilege that arises from destitution and vice versa; and we have struggled to come up with working solutions to the problems of human alienation. And I think that it is suffice to say that in the second decade of the twenty-first century we have not significantly risen above these quests. But what is emerging I think from the multifarious experiences, perceptions and theories of freedom that we have produced is that the very need to decipher this world for ourselves is evident as an axiom of the emancipatory experience itself. Our struggle for freedom is informed by our personal inquiries after freedom. The struggle for freedom then is broadly impeded when we prohibit individualism in the creation of emancipatory ideas through the gatekeeping of 'the correct' theoretical and political ideas.

Oppression is not just physical; if it were, coercion would have a much harder time justifying itself than it does. Our subjection to the material world is affixed by our subjection to the ideas of others. Our material entrapment is secured by the way we internalise those barricaded 'truths' which force us to disbelieve our own experiences. Capitalism teaches us to deny ourselves; for example, we are led to believe that labour is not slavery no matter how it may feel that way, and we doubt it based on the commonly enforced understanding of it as a virtue of practical men. Therefore those sects of socialism which continue the denunciation of individualism secure the type of mental entrapment in their followers which needs to be overcome if the other oppressions of statism and capitalism are ever to be challenged meaningfully by ordinary people. Anarchism, far more than Marxism, recognises that the very drives of human beings to question and self-determine are themselves irreducible in the search for emancipatory experience.

It is anarchism's appreciation of individualism in socialism, which has made it the emancipatory practice which has historically sought to proclaim the "triumph of life over dogma" (Antliff 2004: 101). It therefore provides an historical referent for the voices of popular movements and their expressiveness which have become major forces in the watershed of radical political culture. In contrast to the open-endedness of movements today, the close-ended discourses of traditional communism are drawn sharply into the illuminating light of scrutiny. There is a need

for dynamic theory which more strongly permits self-directed initiatives as part of the primary project for a better world order. This challenge is enriched by the writings of anarchists who laid the foundation for open-endedness in emancipatory theory many decades ago:

Revolutions have no instigators; they come when fate beckons, and end with the exhaustion of the mysterious power that makes them flourish. All revolutions have been carried out through the spontaneous action of the people. When left to their own instincts the people almost always see better than when guided by the policy of leaders. A social revolution...does not occur at the behest of a master with a ready-made theory, or at the dictate of a prophet. A truly organic revolution is a product of life (Proudhon 1848 cited in Guerin 1970:34).

Two very important implications for identifying the need for this adaptation in theory are that:

- (i) On one hand it renews the concept of socialist utopianism.

That a new tide of radicalism is fast upon the world has become an article of faith in political scholarship. After the fall of communism with the Cold War and the ruinous results of Stalinist 'real socialism', the hankering terrain of ideological opposition has led to such grave incitements as Fukuyama's thesis that as far as distinguishable ideological contestation goes, that generally we had reached 'the end of history' (Fukuyama 1992). Without a renowned and striking opposition to systemic inequality Newman (2009a:70) warns that we face the potential of a world "with no interior or exterior" or, as Hakim Bey (1996:4) describes the augury of moribund political imagination, we face "crises of sameness". The article of faith in political scholarship that a new tide of radicalism is fast upon the world is a source of great optimism. The emergent culture of contemporary anarchism has allowed for a rich political philosophy, until now largely untapped by mainstream academia, to be investigated for clues into the potential which still exists for radical opposition today. So the terrain of contemporary anarchism has potential to restore the socialist imaginary.

- (ii) As an extension of this, the second implication can be seen as the excavation, reinvention and restatement of anarchism in twenty-first century terms.

The elements that emergent movements are exhibiting today show a definite deflection from Marxist categories and the type of organisation which those influence. But these “new” emergent elements do not arrive on the field with the cryptic novelty of the previously unseen. What makes the incipient culture “new” and the nature of its interregnum from previous eras is not discrete. This is because its definitive elements – autonomy, prefigurative direct action, anti-statism, voluntary association, direct democracy, experimentality – are deeply imbricated with an existing tradition of thought which has existed for many years, and that is anarchism.

However what is indicated by ‘contemporary anarchism’ is not simply a point in the cumulative development of traditional anarchism. It is a new conception of anarchism. The movements which symbolise contemporary anarchism are not self-consciously anarchists. So the identification of anarchism here is very different to that made for past generations where anarchism generally alluded to the work of self-proclaimed anarchists. Simply put, contemporary anarchism is defined by the emergence of anarchistic elements in organisation as opposed to anarchists per se (Graeber 2002). Radical anti-neoliberal movements are deemed as new forms of ‘anarchism’, circuitously, by the resonance of their organisational tactics with the ethics of anarchism. To designate the term anarchism to movements which themselves defy branding, is to adjust the term anarchism by emphasising its particular quality as a current of thought and a tactical identity as opposed to traditional conceptions of it as a political programme with a fixed strategic character (May 1994:12). Contemporary anarchism rethinks the schematic bounds of the term anarchism. This view of anarchism is in concert with Peter Marshall’s (1993) perception of it as a river of thought or a political impulse which finds generational expression according to the period of struggle in which it is shaped and is indicative of an initial phase of what Curran (2006:15) reckons is a post-ideological shift of movements.

Contemporary anarchism is therefore not simply a statement of anarchism. It is a re-statement of anarchism. By regarding anarchism as a tendency without institutional

specificity it effectively extends the critique of intellectual vanguardism to traditional anarchism itself. This is why “contemporary anarchism often materializes in novel, unfamiliar forms that bear little resemblance to structures undertaken within the historical anarchist movement” (Shantz 2010:25). Contemporary anarchism is but one component of the current situation which may gradually begin to transform the logic of change by shifting our transformative gazes beyond predefined paths or points of arrival. However attention is paid here to the deflections in contemporary movements as an indicator of that which can possibly garner the political imaginary beyond path-trodden edifices of 19th century ideology whose predecessors continue to eulogise the ‘true destiny’ of the working class. The open-endedness and prefigurative emphasis of contemporary radical movements show how we may theoretically answer “How to do revolution?” once theoretical closures and unitary blueprints have been eschewed.

1.4 New conditions for imagination

Changes in revolutionary theory and practice which feed into the emphasis on small-“r” revolutions ultimately refreshes what we see when we turn to face the horizon of socialism. Small-r revolutions refer to spaces of transformation, where communities self-organise so as to experiment in the here-and-now with social, economic and political behaviours which stand asymmetrically to the status quo. If revolution qua prefiguration is the development of ‘the new world’ within immediate and local spaces then the efficacy of discourses which hail one theory, one agency, one leadership and one strategy of revolution is in contest. The contributions of the great theorists of the past who have worked within the big-R agenda of the ‘perfect model’ will be borrowed from, critiqued and interpreted for time immemorial because they have defined the extant field of thought so intrinsically. In spite of this importance of classical works, there are aspects which can and should be reconsidered to provide relevant and new bases of optimism for change in the twenty-first century.

After 500 years of capitalism, it is as evident as ever, that it is not a system which is pro-life, for human and non-human entities alike. But also after 500 years of capitalism, it is clear that theses which once proclaimed the inevitability of capitalism’s destruction through the management of wholesale revolutionary programmes have not come to fruition. More so, developments in theories today tell us that such a programme *cannot* come to fruition. These sorts of theoretical

innovations point to domination as non-linear, able to endure crises and reproduce itself – hence, impossible to demolish at any single front. We are beginning to understand that because the system is contingent, fluid and resilient it cannot be beholden to any one doctrine of revolutionary change. Therefore to avoid the stultification of theory, we must imagine the end-points of revolution differently. I am specifically interested in how contemporary anarchistic trends challenge the depiction of revolutionary possibility. If the parameters of revolution are presented differently in theory, more in line with prefiguration, it offers exciting new potentialities for the way we conceive the limits and possibilities of bottom-up transformation.

It is precisely by the reclamation of the imaginative ethic within socialist theory that new energies can be created in the struggle to create a different social system. What is socialism ultimately, if not the utopian concept, one of human life as it would be if lived in radically alternative conditions? It is an imagining – an idealisation of a better world – which drives socialist ideology. Different socialist elements describe that world and the path to it differently. What remains constant is the *belief* in a radically improved world which propels all socialist action. My point is that all variants of socialism are bound by the tradition of utopianism, and therefore revisions must take into account the binding thread of utopianism which connects old discourse with new. Having reached a point at which the capital “R” socialist end-point is challenged does not mark the rejection of socialism; it does however mean adapting the socialist imagination – away from cataclysmic total liberation to-come and towards depictions of radical liberation as something experienced in the present and incompletely.

Prominent cases of prefigurative/anarchistic movements can be drawn from the radical political terrain, as I have done, to lay bare the relevance of revolutionary images cast in closed-endedness. What I have shown earlier is that there are strong elements within radical political culture today which diverge significantly from mainstream classical theory. However, inclinations toward self-organisation, autonomy and experimental non-hierarchicalism within contemporary movements have reanimated the tradition of anarchism. The anarchical elements within movements today are expressions of anarchism as methodology and not as a strict ideology (Curran 2006: 10). This has long been anarchism’s relationship relative to other long-standing radical ideologies, for example, as Graeber (2007a: 304) delimits the distinction:

“Marxism has tended to be a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy. Anarchism has tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice”.

Regarding anarchism as a ‘tactical’ rather than ‘strategic’ movement (May 1994) allows us to identify the common emergence of anarchistic currents in movements today as a twenty-first century instantiation of ‘contemporary anarchism’. The anarchist practice of prefiguration is carried out widely and can be seen to fulfil a sort of revolutionary practice, even though it does not result in a total negation and transcendence of the system. Prefiguration puts forward experimental non-hierarchicalism as revolutionary, it symbolises the achievement of breaking away momentarily from systems of dependency by pushing and breaking the limits imposed on quotidian life. Interstitial change embodies the greatest revolutionary potential today. Day (2011: 108) articulates this logic:

A desire to create alternatives to state and corporate forms of social organisation, working ‘alongside’ [and beyond] the existing institutions; proceeding in this via disengagement and reconstruction rather than [capital R] revolution, with the end of creating not a new knowable totality, but of enabling experiments and new forms of subjectivity, and finally, focusing on relations between these subjects, in the name of reinventing new forms of community.

The endurance of in-egalitarian modes of life widely feeds the acceptance that “hierarchical relationships may always preclude our ability to be *totally* free” (Millstein 2010: 42; own emphasis). The inescapability of hierarchical systems which history attests to combined with the big-R image of complete liberation creates a theoretical crisis in ‘possibility’ and concomitant political crises in disillusionment. In a world where, as Žižek (1994: cited in Sharpe and Boucher 2010:33) puts it, “it’s easier for people to imagine the world being destroyed by some catastrophic natural event than for them to imagine any political alternative”, I believe that an embrace of small-scale radicalisations as potentially revolutionary is likely to overcome some of the dispiritedness of our time. Autonomous movements built around experimentation show that the task of addressing our shared political repression and economic domination cannot rest on the singularities of authoritarian theory but requires open-endedness, uncertainty and diversity. In light of the characteristics of ‘the new anarchists’ and in the search for potential theoretical framings by which to characterise their non-eschatological approach to revolution, the question

is posed, “if there is no end-point then how do we begin to portray revolution theoretically in terms which satisfy contemporary practical and theoretical conditions?”.

I will be arguing that revolution happens in the radical reconstruction of social and individual relationships in the here-and-now. This is to say that the intricacy and contingency of systems of domination within complex societies do not have to be the cause of hopelessness if we view anti-systemic radicalism not as a quick rupture or an inevitable transcendence but view systemic revolution as a process, an

A-linear, rhizomatic, multiform plurality of resistances, initiatives and indeed, acts which are sometimes spectacular and carnivalesque, sometimes prefigurative, sometimes subterranean, sometimes rooted in institutional change and reform and under certain circumstances, directly transformative (Robinson and Tormey 2005: 104).

Uncertain present-based action must no longer be conceived of as merely the blighted precursors to wholesale, upheavals of the status quo. To conceive of “small-r” revolution in this way is to deny our greatest and most consistent revolutionary potential, that which exists within the relationships of the present, within the everyday lives with which we are familiar. We can now begin to think of these “small-r” changes as defining the scope of revolutionary activity; it is not a sub-component of the grand image if the grand image is not an effective reality. Grand revolution has in reality not been sustained sufficiently to warrant the grandiosity of its image. It is interstitial change which has to date most consistently defined bottom-up transformations of social life. Prefiguring our better world in the ‘here-and-now’ is the greatest actual access we have to the experience of political transcendence.

What we are looking at today is the agglomeration of ideas and practices which guide people in the trip from the society here to the society there in the future. We are witnessing images of ‘revolution’ more subtly in terms of revolutionary process as opposed to end-point. It is about the Zapatistas and the courageousness of their community forms, it is about *Abahlali* and the moments of creating a radically autonomous politics ten years after South Africa comes into a new statist dispensation, it is the joyousness of thousands of marchers on a working-day in the middle of Washington DC during the alter-globalisation protests, and the impassioned negation of civil obedience by thousands of Occupy protesters around the world in 2011 and continuing

today. It is about how we can contribute to the intensity of change in the present moment and about what we can draw from these experiences to vindicate our belief in the utopian possibilities of life. While the emphasis of prefiguration rests on a particular ephemerality, its effects are not necessarily only in the short-term. The achievement of actually realising alternative social relations in the present-tense is so exceptional that it (such as afore-mentioned examples) invokes a torrent of new social interpretations and practices. When we extract externally defined images of transitional ‘certainty’ from revolution, then it becomes the immediate responsibility of people to consciously generate openings of change in quotidian life. Questions may be raised about the authenticity of prefiguration as a means of radicalism. It can be asked whether prefiguration opts out of the status quo sufficiently to be deemed as radical at all. Does it pursue an ethic of the ‘impossible’ enough to be deemed revolutionary or is it simply an empty retreat parading sparse victories of piecemeal change?

It is faith in the long-held definition of revolution as a single millenarian project visitable only upon the guidance of a spectacular group following a ‘correct’ strategy’, which so easily appends the adjective “only” to prefigurative change. Prefigurative transformation and the incremental shifts in the content of the system which it brings need not automatically be disavowed as “only” incremental. It is possible for incremental shifts to be radical. This is where the idea of revolution needs to be cast differently in theory, embraced as an effect as opposed to a concrete thing. In *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, David Graeber (2004:45) supports the reconstitution of revolution in light of prefiguration when he says:

A revolution on a world scale will take a very long time. The easiest way to get our minds around it is to stop thinking about revolution as a thing – “the” revolution, the great cataclysmic break – and instead ask “what is revolutionary action?” We could then suggest: revolutionary action is any collective action which rejects, and therefore confronts, some form of power or domination and in doing so, reconstitutes social relations – even within the collectivity – in that light. Revolutionary action does not necessarily have to aim to topple governments. Attempts to create autonomous communities in the face of power would for instance, be almost by definition revolutionary acts. And history shows us that the continual accumulation of such acts can change (almost) everything.

Imagining revolution differently is central to any theoretical composition seeking to support the anarchical elements (prefiguration, direct democracy, experimentation) of contemporary movements. My particular suggestion here is that for the revolutionary effect of prefiguration to be clearly understood, that it be read in terms of utopianism. De-emphasising predetermined apocalyptic transformation for an emphasis on “building the road as we travel” (Millstein 2010:69) has implications for the concept of utopia. The shift from fixed notions of revolution to prefiguration respectively marks shifts from blueprint utopianism to heterotopianism. Chapter Three will be devoted to an analysis of how theories of revolution may begin to transcend the culture of blueprint utopianism. Blueprint utopianism refers to the imagination of a perfect model of an alternative future society (normally accompanied by detailed stipulations for the regulation of the anticipated society) and is correspondent with the classical emergence of utopianism as a literary tool. Heterotopianism, on the other hand, is composite of the post-structural imaginary which highlights not the apparatus for the achievement or operation of the ‘new world’, but rather defines unregulated spaces of society in which that ‘other world’ exists for a moment as an immediately realisable utopia. The one is close-ended, set in the future and based in perfection. The other is open-ended, set in the present and based on practice, and is immanently more in tune with the promotion of incremental shifts in social content as potentially revolutionary.

1.5 The revolutionary potential of words

What is the academic rhetorical role in re-inspiring anarchism, utopianism and associated social transformation today? Just like we may in the social sciences study things we already have a strong sense of, just in order to know them for sure, so words carry the power of confidence. Words extend our existing impulses. Discourse motivates social impulses into sustained and detailed images which when opportunity beckons may find us choosing differently or ‘being’ differently (or being the same). This is the revolutionary power of words; it affirms impulse into the concrete food of the mind which is image – a gift of conception which finds its greatest reciprocation through action. The latter is the best that words can hope for, not forgetting of course that writing and speaking are themselves actions. So if words of emancipatory inquiry lead to more words, to debate and to critique, then movement, that is, a state of non-indifference has been achieved in societies outside of which the text speaks. To use Jacques Ranciere’s (2004:9) phrase, this is where philosophy becomes “a deed”, “a power of life”.

And yet while it is a task of emancipatory theory to elucidate pathways of real possibility, which is what this thesis tackles, we must not forget that theories of transcendence whether minimalist or maximalist in scope are creative intellectual fictions and can very well find their value in that primarily. The trouble between theory and its relationship to practical matters should not necessarily bear down on the side of thought anymore than it does on the limit of everyday practice to convert thought. To construe imagination as lofty in the face of putatively more important political utilities, as many do, is basically to eschew the continuation of original political theorisation as Davis (1983:17) points out:

All political philosophy deals in fictions – ‘sovereignty’, ‘the dialectic’, ‘general will’, ‘separation of powers’, ‘public opinion’, ‘common good’. Fiction then may be seen as an attribute of utopian writing only in the same sense that is an attribute of all political theorising.

Our imaginative conceptions of society, the human condition, freedom and existence, when made public in social and academic discourse, do not simply remain musings nor immediately rise as intellectual truth but rather slowly become part of the tapestry of our conditioning because they alter and inform the content of our questions and thus our reflection. That which we do not know concretely but whose presence has been introduced to us (through and as question) affects everyday decisions about what we make of society, the human condition, freedom and our own lives. That is to say, phenomena that are unknowable in the absolute but reside as question (that is as theory) do affect everyday human activity – from religion and the belief in God which casts routine to daily life, to the imaginative notion of “nation” and its determination of patriotism, to millenarian images of “global warming” and their impact on consumption. The concrete fidelities of our day to day lives are constantly and deeply influenced by abstractions which are only present to us as collective imaginings. Not one of us experiences first-hand the vast object of global climate or the illusory perimeters which define our nationalities but we believe them to be steadfast because we share collectively in imagining their meaning through discourse. Therefore with regards to this thesis, sociological thought has immense power in directly confronting collective assumptions, particularly when phrased in terms of a most incomparable imagining of humanity, “Is another world possible?”

Much of what is presented in the thesis as a whole is conceptual in nature – from the identifications of anarchistic tendencies in the newest social movements to the study of the very select field of post-structural anarchism and ultimately utopianism as the binding thread. This work seeks to bring these ideas into a frame which is elucidatory of practical possibilities. However, ultimately, it is a work of conceptual synthesis. As Richard Day (2005:68) says, “as always, it should be remembered that social scientists create what they study in the process of studying it – that is to say that from a certain point of view, the newest social movements are an abstraction, a product of the sociological imagination and nothing more – or less than that”.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by establishing the empirical conditions by which divergences of anti-capitalist movements from traditional socialist theory have been observed today. Within this I discussed the increasing impotence of Marxist categories to reflect prefigurative movements in the twenty-first century, which I identified as the new type of organisation defining radicalism today. Associated with the move beyond Marxism, is the broad disinclination of contemporary movements to be packaged in absolutist notions of revolutionary orthodoxy which opens up a unique terrain in which socialist revolution must now be conceptualised. This was followed by an identification of contemporary radical social movements as tactically consistent with the practical canons of anarchist philosophy. In establishing the thrust of the chapters to follow, it was determined that contemporary radical movements can widely be described as *anarchistic* – exhibiting defining ideals of anarchism namely prefiguration, direct democracy and experimentation. Contemporary radicalism, however, reflects a more open-ended stream within the political and philosophic “family” of anarchism. In this sense, contemporary anarchism is introduced as a rise in anarchistic elements as opposed to anarchism per se. Anarchism is introduced as a platform from which to grapple with elements of open-endedness and relativism in commitments towards transformative change. The first chapter is largely dedicated to setting up the relationship between the type of contemporary movements and theory which informs the productive contradiction between anti-essentialism and revolutionary pursuits. It establishes some of the main progenitorial movements, thinkers and ideas animating what I hypothesise as a movement away from scientific utopianism and towards a living utopianism in anti-capitalist discourse today.

CHAPTER TWO:

POST-STRUCTURAL ANARCHISM

“Sociology is no science, and even if it were, revolution would elude scientific analysis for different reasons”

–20th century anarchist, Gustav Landauer (2010/1908: 110)

“Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one” – John Berger
(1980:133)

2.1 Introduction

I started this thesis with a profusion of terms – anarchism, utopianism and revolution – a conflation of big notions to make a small point: today grassroots solidarity often embodies a composite of political horizontalism that is different to and poorly reflected by the images of top-down capital-R revolution made famous by discourses such as vanguardist Marxism. An important challenge faces theory today, namely, the construction of useful images around possibilities for radically altered societies without reverting to rules-based and formulaic utopias of old: of particular interest is the description of prefiguration, the experimental and open-ended tactic at the pulse of everyday radicalism. I am ultimately arguing that there is a shift in the *type* of society-based change embodied by prefiguration compared to the type of change imagined as revolutionary in classical discourse. I posit that images of anarchistic prefiguration may potentially replace old grand notions of socialist utopias in radical political theory.

It is the task of this thesis to open up discussion about why non-blueprinted images of revolution should replace old professorial models and how this could be done. In chapters One and Two of the thesis the focus is on ‘why’ it is important to re-evaluate old capital-R images. In Chapter One social movement tactics unique to the contemporary period are evinced, to show how important on-the-ground realities have upped the ante for retaining revolution’s traditional parameters. In this current Chapter Two, concepts of social revolution based on fixed outcomes will be presented as not only incompatible with trends in social movements but also mismatched

to contemporary theoretical insights. In this chapter I will expose how revolution's classical meaning falls short of the expectations of contemporary theory, particularly those held by post-structuralism. This chapter provides an additional, second reason to revise revolutionary discourse. The question which was initiated in Chapter One thus evolves into deeper criticism in Chapter Two.

At the outset it is necessary to outline the parameters of Chapter Two's inquiry. I start off by defining post-structuralism not as a single theory but as an attitude towards reality which encompasses goals for theory which rely on the intellectual's appreciation for the openness of identity and the impossibility of category. I show how an accepting stance towards uncertainty opens political theorists up to pluralism and diversity—devoid of the self-denial of older theories which feigned pictures of a future world without coercion, with fully constituted human beings emerging to govern this better world. Overall I argue that by integrating uncertainty into the story of revolution we can strengthen the theoretical contexts which inform our perceptions of transformation. More particularly I show that post-structuralism in our time is influencing the context in which such reflection is taking place especially in its influence of anarchist thought. This is a welcome shift in consciousness as Todd May (2010: 5) points out:

Changes in historical contexts provoke changes in the way issues are approached, earlier thinkers interpreted, and action conceived... [W]hether anarchist thought will continue to grow is an open question. History is contingent; it leads neither necessarily to anarchism nor to anything else. One hopes however that a relationship can be cemented between anarchist thought and the larger tradition and reflection keeping alive the possibilities for thought and practice that stem from considering our equality with one another.

In the end I hope that the combination of post-structural thought with anarchist principles can bring to the fore some of the characteristics and transformative benefits of the strand of prefigurative politics in all revolutionary thought and practice. The chapter comprises of three main sections which explain the following:

- Post-structuralism forms part of a broad change in consciousness about the production of truth in academic theory (Section 2.2);

- Post-structuralism is an analogue to particular nuances in anarchism and therefore forms a base from which to emphasise contemporary anarchistic tactics which highlight the value of acknowledging uncertainty in revolutionary discourse (Section 2.3); and
- Post-structuralist anarchism, a new variety of anarchism provides exciting insights about human subjectivity and power which fuel the urgency of non-universal constructions of revolution's image (Section 2.4).

2.2 A broad change in consciousness

Structuralism forms a part of modernism, just as post-structuralism is a particular variation on post-modernism. *In toto* they are all ontological systems which try to explain the nature of human existence and experience – with periodic differences like modernism and post-modernism and structuralism and post-structuralism indicating how ‘truth’ is a convention which is changing all the time. Modernism is defined by philosophies which are subject-centred and which attempt to present scientific descriptions, regularities and laws for social development. Structuralism is a particular defence of modernism. For structuralists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Levi Strauss, what could be said about meaning was that it was determined in a fixed system of difference in which symbols and their meanings were attributable to a universal, deep and innate social structure (Quigley 2009). With structuralists reality was determined in a relatively permanent and complete domain of external structures which could be studied empirically (Jun 2008:205). The idea that truth could be understood through systems of fixed meaning endowed most modernistic theory with the task of establishing rational objectivity through their works.

However, during the past few decades the credibility of ‘scientific’ theories of human experience has been contested by a growing awareness amongst progressive scholars that universal theories of society cannot be confirmed nor falsified because they are not beholden to specific times or places and therefore, also inevitably, because they exclude relativism (Hospers 1990:175; Danermark *et al.* 2002:7). Insofar as critiques of scientific rationalism extend, post-structuralism is the most radical of the critiques. Post-structuralism is a “rejection of explanations that the human condition can be explained by reference to underlying structures that are subject to objective analysis outside the discourse that constructs these structures” (Morland 2004:27). It is an “alternative political philosophy that articulates the tension between the world as it is and the

world as it could be” (May 1995: 2). And what could be, according to post-structuralism, is a world where the subject is rearticulated as decentred, truth as contextual and reality as contingent to many “auras of suggestion” within a network of signification absent of hard truths (Quigley 2009:3). Post-structuralism is a critique of the limits of modernism to convey human experience in discourse. Even though political discourse cannot help but refer to frames of reference made concrete by Enlightenment thought, post-structuralism signals a turn which is ushering us past the point where we can accept modernism as a whole and it evokes hope for a time when we will be able to share ideas of collective possibility without reverting to claims of objectivity.

There is no single meta-narrative which covers post-structuralism. In order to understand its particular prejudice against modern programmes such as Marxism, it is helpful to understand post-structuralism as a variety of a broader cultural turn commonly referred to as post-modernism. The “postmodern condition” is described by Lyotard (1984: quoted in Venkatesh 1992) as the realisation that there is no single truth but multiple realities; that societies are not governed solely by instrumental reason but are subject to cultural processes that cannot be explained by reason alone; that modernism is itself an egregious male-oriented conceptualisation of the world; that progress does not mean marching linearly towards a predetermined goal; and that the quality of life need not be measured in economic and material terms only. ‘Post-’ movements which pushed these sorts of ideas arose after the World Wars when the need was recognised for human life to be addressed in ways that were less totalitarian and more conscious of qualitative fragmentations (Vattimo 1992). There is no consensus on the periodisation of postmodernism, however, it is widely held that postmodernism had two main catalysts – the aesthetic/artistic movements of the 1960s and then the emergence of post-structuralism in the 1980s.

Post-structuralism offers alternative epistemologies to what communist socialism offered in the past (Mirchandani 2005:5). Post-structuralism is a pivot between the cultural and philosophical aspects of postmodernism. Ultimately it urges a move away from macro-social universalisms towards understandings of the micro, the particular, and the disunities of social structures. According to Mirchandani (2005:13), the field of sociology has long pushed the themes which now define postmodernism and post-structuralism. However, that these themes of contingency, practicality, non-universality and open-endedness have now reached the level of critique at

which the science of knowledge as a whole is being reinvigorated by it, speaks of an important event in the history of post-modernism as a whole.

Indeed, it is important to note that post-structural influences are not isolated to the humanities alone but are part of a broader epochal turn in how we are starting to think about reality through theory. As I see it, in any given period the major criteria for what constitutes compelling thought, valid ideas and worthy representations of reality are directly linked to the way in which a society is placed with regards to its past – particularly its failures – and to its future (particularly the idea of improvement). The underlying criteria for representations of society in theory are therefore telling of far more than academic measure; the criteria for what constitutes ‘truth’ as I said is a signal of where society has come from and where it hopes to go. Discourses and their presuppositions do not exist independently of the societies of which they are born and to which they speak. What drives us to evaluate certain theories as valuable, making them and not other theories the ‘dominant’ expressions of the reality of our time, are deeply reflective of social-political relations at a particular point in history. What this means for post-structuralism is that it is not just a fashionable theory. The fact that it has so widely been regarded as an exemplar of twenty-first century discourse means that it reflects a way of seeing the world that is important to the conditions of our time, emphasising ways of interpretation, and qualities of being, that were not emphasised in modern discourse, but which now are regarded as integral to our search for meaning.

In his excellent book *The Story of Science and Ideas in the Twentieth Century: from Certainty to Uncertainty*, Peat (2002) makes a similar point. He shows that the move away from modernism towards postmodernism represents a broad change in direction for our consciousness of what is credible not only in terms of social theory, but in political organisation and even the natural sciences too. The human sciences have always been eager to transpose the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences. Amusingly, the humanities have been a bit recalcitrant to catching up with the ‘hard’ sciences when it comes to post-structuralism. Most of the social sciences still follow late 19th and early 20th century Enlightenment-based Newtonian science whose proponents declared “all that could be known is known” and whose methodologies involved breaking the world into smaller parts to discover the ultimate grounds for reality (Peat 2002: 4; 36). The natural sciences have moved on, even with “post-modern physics” emerging in

the late twentieth century (Peat 2002: 73). All in all, early discourses were part of a social system which looked upon linear causality and conclusions of certainty as the measures of profundity.

Discourses of radical social change at that time had a tendency to work backwards from the nature of the post-revolutionary situation they sought, to defining the path to this hoped-for society in terms of 'correctness' and 'inevitability'. Marxism is the most influential expression of scientific socialism born of that era. With orthodox Marxism, a classless society is envisioned as the ultimate truth of emancipation, with the path to this singular truth outlined in scientific terms as a linear teleological development requiring centralised power and socialist accumulation, an objective method through which *all* societies could achieve communism, eventually. The philosophic roots of classical anarchism in the same era are influenced similarly. Energies toward emancipation seemed most validated when sketched as elegant formalisms with large-scale notions of certainty. This is evidenced by Mikhail Bakunin when he justifies the innate and singular superiority of an anarchist society in the 19th century: "History and statistics prove to us that the social body, like any other natural body, *obeys* in its evolutions and transformations *fixed general laws* which appear to be just as necessary as the laws of the physical world" (Maximoff 1953:75; own emphasis).

If the dominant fidelities of intellectual 'validity' are symbolic of the socio-political idealism of a specific time, then post-structuralism with its fidelity to frictions, uncertainties, subjective realities and overall anti-foundationalism is cause for some concern, but also for optimism. When the claims of Newtonian physics gave way to relativism and quantum science, the natural sciences made the discursive jump from certainty to images of uncertainty and complexity. According to Peat (2002:64), in mathematics around this time Gödel's theorem made the landmark supposition that in the new millennium we need to find ways of thinking about truth outside of absolutes, perfection and rule-bound hierarchies. Scientific discoveries in the twenty-first century were primed to produce not the known but the unknown. A new and more subjective conception of what is real predisposes us to treating life not as an object to be manipulated but as a matrix which is largely unknown (of which we are a constant part of its motion), in flux collectively and individually, with the future unknowable in certain terms and the present infinitely malleable. And the great value of this for revolution? We are now able to gaze upon the idea of radical change and radical collectivities without certainty, and still see

radical political potential. When a new mode of understanding such as post-structuralism is legitimated, when it makes acceptable an appreciation of uncertainty and difference, then expectation arises for new types of political action to be emphasised, validated and supported by new threads of reasonability.

With the move from certainty to uncertainty, we begin to notice social movements which positivistic theory has always had a specific deafness towards. For example when we see the social world as being in a state of constant creation (not squared down by hard truth), then we begin to appreciate social movements which behave as though they were not powerless to the enforced purities of political compartmentalisations; when we realise that we are being created by and creating unpredictability simultaneously then we realise that truths in social movement need not be a hegemonic construct. Ultimately post-structuralism appeals to the specificity of contexts and asks that we who are in the practice of theory never believe truth to be anything but contingent. For post-structuralists, “subjects and structures are sedimentations of practices whose source cannot be discovered in a privileged ontological domain but that must be sought, rather, among specific practices in which they arise” (May 1994:78).

Post-structuralism is ultimately a critical response to representationalism on two broad counts – count one, the idea that theory can represent people to themselves and count two, the unfavourability of imposing unities discursively which do not exist in actuality. It is worth reminding ourselves that ‘representation’ does not belong exclusively to the modern era. Post-structuralism does not abjure representation as a whole, but takes issue with the direction of thought which captures reality as “objective reality” – “subsuming myriad differences under a totalised homogenous identity” (Venkatesh 1992; Jun 2008:160).

As I described earlier, the problem with systems of theoretical representation getting it wrong is that they correspond to the realm of socio-political events. The way in which theory models reality in argument and discussion makes particular actions, social configurations and expressions of life more valid, important and sharable than others at a particular time. Post-structuralists are therefore wary of the representation of life as universalisable by fixed concepts – to them this is a culture of representation which separates the determination of what is ‘correct’ from what is experienced. The most dangerous aspect of modern thought is that society describes itself and its politics by the fixed aggregations of a handful of theorists. It is this great power

granted to the theorist as a result of fixed representationalism which post-structuralism has emerged to tackle:

For the post-structuralists there is a Stalin waiting behind every universalistic political theory – either you conform to the concepts on which it relies, or else you must be changed or eliminated in favour of those concepts. Foundationalism in political theory is, in short, inseparable from [political] representation (May 1989: 177).

In the post-Marxist era, while we may be supposedly too sophisticated to swallow 19th century Marxism whole, according to Reedy (2002:16) we still unreflectively retain the underlying habits of modernism which behoves Marxism's weaknesses. Post-structuralism confronts 'issues of representation' by, first of all, questioning the validity of representing people to themselves and, secondly, by critiquing the elevation of unity over multiplicity.

In terms of questioning the first form of representation, post-structuralists believe that practices of representing to people who they are or what they want, if nothing else the dominant strategy of traditional modernist philosophy, ought as much as possible to be avoided (Jun 2008:139). When Marx employs economic reductionism to describe labour as species-being (the metaphysical essence of *all* humanity), it stands as a moment in the intellectualisation of revolution where there is an effort being made to stop people from thinking for themselves about what freedom means. For post-modern leftists like Sender (1990: 253), this is "at base religious". Inculcating a faith in the 'correct strategy' for the 'full subjectivity' or 'total man' puts in place a power for people to obey, a different kind of authoritarian centralism, in the form of discourse.

The second issue of representation which post-structuralism takes up is the universalisation of concepts referred to as "the substitution of the one for the many, the general for the particular" (Jun (2008: 1159). For those discourses which promote one concatenation of insurrectionary events there is no real competition of ideas, and no struggle between material context and emancipatory ideal in determining the meaning of freedom – only one superior transcendent answer. Socialist orthodoxy, in speaking for the 'general will', tends to devolve into this sort of universal programme for the good life. It pushes the consciousness of a superior universal answer which becomes an answer constructed miraculously outside of everyday space, an answer so pure as to belong to 'science'; and there are those (theoreticians) who command or

possess the principle which gives them the right to rule as vanguards on the basis of this answer. The philosophical belief in privileged political knowledge, in rare and universal truths unknowable by ordinary people but necessary for emancipation, is a belief which not only haunts old revolutionary theory but which affirms the top-down polity we confront everyday where liberalism, NGO movements and party politics engender a similar faith in socio-political solutions which come in packages, proposals, unitary ideas and sacred policies bequeathed from above.

Yet it may still be difficult to figure out exactly why delivering fixed ideas of what people collectively want and insisting on universalities can be considered as a force of “Stalin waiting behind political theory”? Representationalism is problematic because, as Hospers (1990:157) points out, universal regularities in human experience do not actually exist but are forced by theorists who seek a basis for prediction because those who can predict can also delegate the power to control the course of events. Representing the dynamics of society as universal allows politicians, theorists and also vanguard revolutionaries to proclaim what is right and wrong for masses of people whom they allege to know through humanistic and scientific insight. And as much as post-structuralism has its problems, it refreshingly responds to the type of representations which existed in modernist theory which may have made events like the Gulags possible. According to Docherty (1990:243) “all revolutionary and leftist movements live haunted by the shadows of the camps”. And because theory is a good indicator of the scales of socio-political plausibility in the real world, revising the nuances of revolutionary theory can promote new notions of validity for political ‘leadership’.

According to post-structuralists movement and plurality are far greater attributes of society than static being is and therefore truthful perspectives should be built around the former and not the latter. Todd May (2003: 142-143) argues in his discussion on Deleuzian post-structuralism that: “The point of a philosophical perspective is not to tell what the world is like – but to create a perspective through which the world takes on a new significance. Multiplicity is the affirmation of unity”. Post-structuralism has convinced us that human beings do not contain inevitable predictable characteristics that will linearly lead them to system-wide revolution. The changing duty of theory in light of post-structuralism means that revolution can now be described in terms which privilege open-endedness and incrementality over cataclysm and closed-endedness.

2.3 A duty to uncertainty and plurality

Of all the proliferations of post-structuralism in recent years, the variation known as post-structuralist anarchism (a combination of the traditions of post-structuralism and anarchism) most connects a critique of representationalism in discourse with political organisation in a way that speaks to the tactics of contemporary activism. A small group of scholars including Richard Day, Todd May, Lewis Call, Jason Adams and Saul Newman introduced the first major writings which attempted to enhance anarchism through the lens of post-structuralism. Post-anarchism is growing rapidly, and in recent years it has become the inspiration for the international journal *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*. According to Lewis Call (2010:11) this indicates that post-anarchism represents “not merely a moment but an actual movement”. Post-anarchism has opened up a platform from which to theorise political organisation without essentialist guarantees (Newman 2010:1). Through post-structural-anarchism one is able to travel a plane of thought away from Newtonian world views towards conceptions of a freer society in non-universalistic terms.

Post-anarchism’s “rejection of essentialism, a preference of randomness, fluidity, hybridity and a repudiation of vanguard tactics which include a range of occidental assumptions in the framing of anarchism” (Franks 2008: 1) means that it accepts the anti-hierarchical socialist ethos at the heart of classical anarchism but rejects the modernistic tendencies one finds in the framing of classical anarchism. To post-structural anarchists, anarchism in its classical framing is tied to positivism and the prediction of revolutionary end-points which it shares with Marxism. To Saul Newman (2010:7) “post-anarchism might be seen as an exploration of this aporetic moment in anarchism”. Post-anarchism takes the successes of anarchism as determined by the qualities of post-structuralism and builds on it to establish an assemblage of contemporary thought through which prefiguration can be affirmed as a tactic today. Day explains (2005: 16; 94; own emphasis):

Post-anarchist writers have argued that [classical anarchism] retains the marks of its birth out of the womb of the European Enlightenment ... Post-anarchist theory claims that certain elements of the Nietzschean inflected thought of Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault and in some cases, Lyotard and Baudrillard, can be seen as distinct from, but compatible with, an anarchism stripped of its essentialising elements ... I would say that there exists

certain common themes and ethico-political commitments between anarchism and post-structuralism, such that one might accurately point out certain *anarchistic elements* in the work of those post-structuralist writers who took up and deepened the critique of western humanism and the project of the Enlightenment. Seen in this way, the project of post-anarchism makes sense to me.

Post-anarchism looks upon the modernist tendencies in classical anarchism as presupposing certain forms of undesirable political control. At the same time it seeks to extend the anti-representationalism at the heart of anarchism. Therefore post-anarchists confirm that post-anarchism does not represent a brand new anarchism (Newman 2010b) and “there is little to eliminate in classical anarchism and a lot to take if you are talking about a post-anarchism today” (Evren 2008). But in spite of concessions to this effect made by post-anarchists, many critics still polarise post-anarchism from its predecessors (Price 2009). I certainly believe that this is unnecessary and that the major themes of anarchism are encompassing enough to avert the vaults and divisions of anarchists who proclaim an ‘either or’ stance to anarchism’s definition – either social or lifestyle based; either open or class based; either post-structural or traditional. These types of internal debates are not unique to anarchism; I suppose they crop up amongst the self-proclaimed orators of any tradition when change or challenge arises.

What is apparent to me is that the paranoid urge to stake pure definitions does not change the appeal of the new to enhance the old and vice versa. Post-structural anarchism is not a *war* – it is the identification of tendencies, inflections and emphases associated with a past era juxtaposed to those of the present in order to sketch a contemporary inclination to open the conception of radical futures. Anarchism is not dissolved by coming into contact with more recent forms but is given a new lease on life. We have the option to apply post-structuralism constructively, and bring anarchism into a practical and theoretical agenda as something more powerful. Or we can dismiss new paradigms such as the post-anarchist problematic as irrelevant

simply because it does not feature in the historical lexicon of the (anarchist) discourse to which it claims affinities.⁶

I refer to overarching modernist ideas by using terms like ‘rational objectivity’, ‘universalism’ and ‘positivism’; in this way, the characteristics of certain paradigms of the 19th Century may appear de-contextualised, a flaw which is indeed derisive of the thinkers and organisations of the past whom I sweepingly refer to as ‘classical’ or ‘traditional’. It is not though my task to present a monograph of classical anarchists or to describe the veracity that they had in the context of their emergence. My argument and the arguments that the post-anarchists at large attempt to make take up a different task. We look at how paradigm shifts in the philosophy of truth – particularly as manifest in the tendencies internal to anarchism – provides opportunities to better accommodate theoretically the nature of contemporary tactics and movements. As outlined in Chapter One, the radical tactic of prefiguration is observed as being at the heart of contemporary radicalism witnessed in the Lacandon forest, South Africa’s townships and most recently in Wall Street and across the world with the ‘Occupy Protests’. Prefiguration is a tactic with roots lodged in the heart of traditional anarchism and therefore is defined today as part of the *anarchistic* nature of contemporary movements. The post-anarchist task is the task of undergirding contemporary anarchist tactics through post-structuralism.

Long before post-structuralism, anarchism privileged the sites of everyday social relations as the primary space of radicalism. Anarchism has historically aligned itself against structuralists who “invest structures with a surrogate agency, with a determining role in the production of subjects” (Carter and Morland 2004:21). Anarchists were truly the first socialists to regard high theory as oppressive, with subjection to a theory obviously undermining the intention of creating a society without central political authority. Therefore Nathan Jun (2008) argues that rather than seeing post-structuralism as a form of anarchism today it is rather more accurate to see anarchism as laying the first seeds of political post-modernity, and post-anarchism as simply nurturing and pulling out those particular post-structural strands of anarchism which are now relevant for the twenty first century. While I agree with Jun (2008) that a spirit of micro-sociological analysis

⁶ The rejection of post-structural infusions within anarchism is based on a purist’s view which ignores anarchism’s own search for antecedents in its early stages of emergence. Classical anarchists found ancestors in the slave revolts of the Roman Empire, in the peasant revolt of England in 1391 and in the insurrection of the Taborites in Bohemia in 1493, See Ward (2004:14).

“was present in a greater or lesser extent in classical anarchism”, an explicit critique of epistemological authoritarianism was not dominant back then because post-structuralism had not yet come to the fore. By making the epistemological critique central, post-anarchism brings something unique to bear on anarchism.

It is true that anarchism has always insisted on the priority of life over theory but many of its leading theorists, unconsciously abiding by the modernist representationalism of the time, articulated anarchism’s images of revolution with the unmistakable positivism of the Enlightenment – rationality as universal, and human nature as essentialised. It is important to stress as Jun (2008) does that the early anarchists provide an entry point to post-structural thought. However, in spite of this, classical anarchism still largely appeals to the Enlightenment foundations of its time. Marxism and anarchism both arose during the period of high European modernity where the *sine qua non* of scholarship was that of scientific objectivism (Day 2005:9). Classical anarchists writing on revolution in the 19th Century often fell under the sway of proprietary claims of a ‘correct path’ for revolution. Post-anarchism seeks to remedy classical anarchism of its old duties to certainty without betraying its spirits and aims. Traditionally anarchism has gotten close, but post-anarchism has gotten even closer, to the presentation of revolutionary utopias which are not authoritarian.

According to 20th century anarchist Landauer (2010: 111), “to realize” through theory means not only “to understand” but also “to make real”, showing theory to be not only a project of observation but of creation too. Post-structuralism not only observes the potential for authoritarianism in claims of certainty about the future, but furthermore desires the constitution of theories through which the decentering of truths may serve people politically, possibly through the empowerment of quotidian space. Contemporary radical activism as I have shown is deeply inclined to open-endedness both ideologically and tactically. We need theoretical frameworks which can include open-ended everyday practices in sketchings of social revolutionisation. The post-structuralist lesson that there are no singular inevitabilities and that therefore assertions of totalising truths are in themselves forms of domination leads to an appreciation of discourse which tries to privilege revolution as an everyday complexity.

When post-structuralist anarchism is written about, it is generally accompanied by a description of social movements which reflects these properties (Morland 2004; Dempsey and Rowe 2004;

Mueller 2003). Descriptions of complexity and contingency tend to refer not only to the fluid internal properties of organisations involved in the alter-globalisation movement, the autonomous political communities of Mexico and South Africa and more recently the global Occupy networks but also about understanding the devices they use to effect the world around them.

Widely observed strategems such as prefiguration in these socio-political settings are definitively not about having “no goals, or long-term strategy...defending the idea of nothing”, as Kerl (2010:4-7) argues, but it is about having goals which register with reality and the limitations of structural transcendence. It is about “building alternative subjectivities and ways of being within the currently hegemonic order” (Day 2005:35) to concretely realise “if only for a short time” an “island of achieved social change, a place where the revolution has actually happened” (Williams and Thompson 2010 :10). And it is about the small “r” revolutions which take place within the complex and unpredictable terrain of society which ultimately “expand the floor of the cage” (Chomsky 2010). These revolutionary moments of day to day life are not adequately reflected by objectivist theories or their romanticisation of totalising rupture. Contemporary movements, in their dissociation from post-revolutionary resting points, have transposed the notion of social revolution to the present tense. It is now up to sociological theory to follow suit.

Ultimately post-anarchism is not a hollowing out of anarchism but a constellation of practices which prioritises discourses, agencies and tactics which parallel anarchism in spirit. It has many similarities with classical anarchism but is distinct from it, notably in its opposition to modernist thought and the deficiencies of objective rationalisation. Post-anarchism offers a post-structural revision of socialism in an attempt to surpass closed ‘ideological’ visions. In order to reach a point of intellectual pluralism we have to first confront “objectivity” as a “totalizing concept of ‘Truth’” (Haraway 1988:575). If we are to build a new society, as DeLeon and Love (2010:160) write, “then these epistemological foundations must be challenged to help demonstrate the oppressive nature inherent in socially constructed notions of what knowledge is”. This allows us to shift social theory into a prefigurative role itself where we consciously shape it to embody the goal of anti-authoritarianism. By questioning the intellectual tendencies along certain ‘prefab’ paths we are questioning political vanguardism as it manifests in the creation of theory. In the following section, the two specific epistemological foundations (namely essentialism and

Manichean ideas of power) which post-anarchism rejects in the service of non-totalising images of revolution are outlined.

2.4 Validating quotidian tactics

Within the political context of contemporary anarchism, post-structuralism has become rather important. By providing a theoretical framework that supports the impossibility of knowable ends, post-structuralism accommodates radical theory which concerns itself with experimentation over axioms. The philosophical movement of post-structuralist anarchism particularly provides a strong basis from which to forward prefigurative experimentation as the most significant lance for revolution today. Post-structural anarchism asks us to reconsider emancipatory visions without universal programmes – a consideration which I choose to see not as a cautionary tale of post-modernism, ‘behemoth of the twenty-first century human sciences’, but rather to see the challenge as an opportunity to actuate a culture of theorisation conscious of its own uncertainty.

The customary role of sociologists to navigate social disequilibria so that we better understand issues of agency and change makes it, according to Graeber (2007a: 315-317), built for the study of revolution. In fact defining revolution marks an historical point of emergence for the discipline. After the French Revolution, when the changing of regimes failed to transform society, scholarly attention was significantly drawn to the (non)changeability of principles of order; this laid the groundwork for what would later emerge as the major themes of sociology. Today the ecumenical agenda of sociology remains intact. I urge only a reformulation of the role of its theory to more comfortably reflect real praxis of radical transformation. This requires that more space be given to a type of transformation which happens not within the gamut of the nation-state but within everyday life, not along lines which are strategically predetermined but along lines of flight faced within the present, and not towards a complete end-point but through an unending process of partial solutions. It is about adding to the ongoing sociological theatre of ‘revolution’ with post-structural and anarchistic insights.

In this section I will submit specifically the post-anarchist’s rejection of the possibility of totalising change. In the end, accepting the impossibility of totalising change at a single point means that projects built around the specious identification of the guardians of total rupture fall

by the wayside and we are left facing an opportunity to leverage new spatio-temporal images of how revolution *does* and *can* take place. This implies an opportunity to explore smaller-scale approaches to what revolutionising society could mean. I will show that the prefigurative-anarchical bearings on transformation detailed in Chapter One and concomitant suggestions about the meaning of revolution can be supported through particular post-structural insights.

2.4.1 The impossibility of totalising change

Of the most vibrant elements of post-structuralism is the political element which says it is not possible to entirely eliminate domination. This is based on its dismissal of humanism. By humanism I mean to describe one of the greatest nuclei around which modern western research in the social sciences has been built for decades. Humanism is the use of reason to define a timeless truth to human subjectivity in order to “endorse universal morality based on the commonality of the human condition” (Wolfe 2010: xi). Symbolising truth in this way was the Enlightenment’s response to the pre-modernist attitude that emancipation was determined predominantly on the basis of man’s relationship with God. In order to replace superstition with materiality, being was reconstructed as a scientifically-discernible essence⁷.

Today humanism, that is, promoting the idea that all human life converges on an anthropological universal, is often regarded as an act of domination itself. Humanism renders revolutionary discourse as the management of a static and pure state of being. To Newman (2001:39; 2005:87) humanism only superficially changed the centrality of divinity over life’s affairs, because since the Enlightenment “the alienating category of God is retained and solidified by entrenching it in Man” so that “political theory is still dominated by the need for some sort of essential subjectivity that it has never had and yet continually tries to invoke”. Nineteenth century socialism generally employs humanism where revolution is imagined as the elimination of oppressive power to set free a metaphysical human essence (normally an egalitarian essence). It is easy to see, with humanism, that emancipatory theory largely is concerned with uncovering the

⁷ This was specifically called Feurbachian humanism. Feurbach (1841) in his seminal work *The Essence of Christianity* looks at how people alienate themselves from their essence through the religious projection of a ‘God’ which denies self-recognition. Feurbach replaced the centrality of religion and god with the social-scientific relationship of “man to man” which became the basis of his theory and greatly influenced early communism.

correct 'way out' of unravelling an answer which points to our essential selves, an answer applicable across all possessing the same essential nature. Post-structuralism disagrees, by saying that subjectivity cannot be anything but unfixed and argues that power has not a few but an infinite many and unknowable centres immanent within the human condition, and therefore there can be no law waiting to be unravelled for the total liberation of pure humankind. Revolution in post-structural terms cannot be the playing out of a scientific destiny.

Post-structuralism faces great difficulties in translating its critique of universalities into affirmative perspectives on action. My interest with regards to the real-world implications of post-structural theory is limited to its development of theoretical principles for revolution. It is an interest that I share with post-anarchists who believe "that contrary to prevailing critiques of post-structuralism, there is the possibility of a radical and emancipative generality emerging from within its [post-structuralism's] own logic" (Newman 2005a: 135). Post-anarchist thought appears to privilege non-totalising narratives as the main intellectual complement for the kind of political action – interstitial radicalisations mentioned in Chapter One – which holds the greatest potential for egalitarian emancipation today. Richard Day (2005:45) writing in the tradition of post-anarchism stresses this connection between radicalism and non-totalisation when he says:

Unlike revolutionary struggles which seek totalising effects across all aspects of the existing social order by taking state power or reforming state power on selected axes, these [prefigurative] movements/tactics do not seek totalising effects at all... They challenge the notion that the only way to achieve meaningful social change is by way of totalising effects across an entire society. They are undoing the hegemony of hegemony.

In order to reconfigure theory to the non-totalising tendencies of radical movements I explore in the following more closely the post-structural ideas of subjectivity and power .

2.4.2 Post-anarchism and essentialism

The essentialism of a "true human nature" is endemic to 19th Century political thought. Essentialism is the portrayal of human subjectivity as a component of natural social laws (Donzelot 1979: 73-86). It is a discursive trend shared by classical anarchists and Marxists alike through a culture of "structuralism which tended to dissolve the subject into a determining structure" (Choat 2010a: 8). For Marx the determining structure of human subjectivity was

economic class. He essentialised the proletariat as the inevitable harbingers of revolutionary change, of course, at the exclusion of other classes. Realising identity as something embedded in science was such an important rationalisation for structuralists to make, that conclusions were stated as *fait accompli*. For example, Marx confidently distinguished the non-proletariat working class, the *lumpenproletariat* (vagrants), as “social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the layers of the old society” (Marx and Engels 2005: 482) while his patron Engels confidently reasoned that “[j]ust as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history” (Engels 1883). Nineteenth century anarchists were also privy to this culture of essentialism. Overwhelmingly within classical anarchist literature one finds amongst the 18th and 19th century adulators of anarchism a tendency to justify the tradition in terms of a grounded human nature.

Within classical anarchism, human beings are represented as naturally cooperative, social and benign monads whose essences become contaminated by extrinsic institutions of domination – “this is the binary dialectical logic that pervades anarchism” (Newman 2001: 47-48). Forefather of revolutionary anarchism, Bakunin made the distinction between artificial laws imposed on men by political and juridical systems – exterior laws that needed to be rejected – and social natural laws, i.e. the type of laws which constitute men and define “their good essence” (Morris 1993 : 96; Newman 2001:38). Natural social laws are the social life force according to Bakunin, a natural force eroded by domination but one to which man is always bound: “Those [natural] laws are not extrinsic in relation to us, they are inherent in us, they constitute our nature, our whole being physically, intellectually and morally” (Newman 2005a: 36; Maximoff 1953:239). Another figurehead of classical anarchism, Kropotkin, based his conception of mankind on another essence, namely, a universal animal nature (Koch 1993:4). In an anti-Darwinian rhetoric he says that it is not the law of mutual struggle in nature which asserts the evolution of a species but rather the law of *mutual aid*. To Kropotkin, a latent tendency to co-operation and sociability (a natural propensity for mutual aid which he associates with all people) is destroyed by oppressive institutions.

A reading of emancipation in essentialist terms, as a war of the natural self up against external conditions, has had tremendous implications for the role of theory. To define freedom in terms of metaphysical naturalism is firstly to regard theorists as having special privilege to truth. For

theorists to proclaim a human essence intrinsic to social laws is for them to assume foresight of a closed range of what is, and more so what is to be done in the name of complete freedom. In other words, when 19th century anarchists made proclamations comparing “the face of nature” with “the purpose that society sets itself” (Pisacane 1857: cited in Graham 2005:65), they represented emancipation as the challenge of interpreting a known but hidden truth to which they had a special right. Classical anarchist, Proudhon (1966:276), makes the result of essentialism for theory clear when he says that “political truths exist and can be understood but only by rational scientific inquiry” (Proudhon 1966: cited in Koch 1993:5).

In recent times it has become popular to question discourses framed with such perfectionism. It has become increasingly clear that such discourses risk tying freedom down theoretically within the domain of savants and therefore political action within the corpus of authority. The essentialism of discourse has naturalised the idea that society en-masse can be bound to a universal vision and if people could only struggle collectively for this vision the prize was a state of ‘pure revolution’. The tendency to imagine revolution as the absolute achievement of a rational society is exemplified in many classical anarchist essays such as Pierre Proudhon in *The General Idea of Revolution* (1851) and Carlo Pisacane in *On Revolution* (1857) who blueprint systemic transformation respectively in terms of rules and an enumerated list of principles.

This is not an exhaustive picture of anarchism. It is intended to tease out a recurring feature – the essentialism of human nature as dormant and pure – as a common representation within classical tracts. More recent inquiries into anarchist theory often seek to correct the essentialism of classical discourse by comparing it to post-structuralism. But why would we need a post-structural correction to classical depictions of ‘natural human essence’? How could the idea that a ‘natural subjectivity’ exists be harmful to revolutionary theory? Why do post-structuralists like Michel Foucault observe with such incredulity the right of theorists to proclaim a universal human nature?

To look at ourselves as a fraternity bound to one another by a core of goodness that will someday be invoked in revolution does not at face value seem like such a corrupted idea. In fact the binary of ‘good’ society versus ‘bad’ power makes for quite a nice story-line in the depiction of revolutionary discourse. But it is exactly because the standpoint of essentialism tells a single, universal story, and it is precisely because it has such powerful utility value in representing a

one-size-fits-all picture, that we must question what realities it excludes from its narrative and what implications these exclusions have for the overall role of theory. In his seminal work *The Ego and His Own* (1845), Max Stirner shows how the obsession with “the static concept” emerged as the primary feature of theory in the modern age (Welsh 2010). Eager to render truisms of the world, theoretical conceptions surpassed life and “the real living ‘man’ was turned into the generalised concept of ‘Man’” (Stirner 1973: cited in Koch 1993:7). This had the effect of portraying progress as the unfolding of our fixed human essence. Therefore “history itself became hostage to our essence or subordinate to an underlying principle that drives it in the direction in which we find it going” (May 2005:66). Essentialism forces us to overlook that “history is nothing but the ceaseless clash of representations – essence itself is a representation, nothing more” (Newman 2001: 80).

What Stirner (1973: cited in Koch 1993:7) called the “foolishness of the fixed idea” was the construction of life in the image of ideas and not the other way around. We became unable to represent the unpredictability of real social life outside of models and presuppositions. Nietzsche (1957: 15) in his rejection of Enlightenment epistemology said:

To generate knowledge, particularly of history and culture, one must continually limit the universe of one’s objects, closing the system. One must draw a boundary around that which is relevant. But to do so takes the phenomenon outside the context of its occurrence. This process negates the possibility of truth. Therefore, history never contains truth; it is the past transformed to resemble the present.

The idea of an eternal essence which binds us all is illusory. Post-structuralism occurs at the pivot of structuralism’s waning influence and as the starting point for a future of discourses less confined to categorical fixity. According to Jun (2008: 206) post-structuralism is not a single doctrine but incorporates various thinkers with similar commitments, common concerns and shared orientations. One of its key critiques is made against the assumption that humans can be “objective about themselves” (Cahoone 2003:6). To post-structuralists, modernity accomplished the subjugation of individuals through the use of an epistemology that prioritises rationality (and its residue “the concept”) over that which is immediate, in flux and unknowable (Koch 1993:23). Instead of concentrating on human “essence”, post-structuralism concentrates on social “phenomena” to “show that the subject is not merely determined but constituted at the

intersection of various relations” (Choat 2010b:20). Post-structuralism does not only fault the logic of essentialism but goes a step further, criticizing the connection between descriptions of essentialism and the arguably more dangerous consequences which follow from it. To represent individuals as pure and natural is to apply a false sense of pre-designation to aims of universal resistance, and it is to employ the fiction of a totalising human essence to create consensus around this political aim. Post-structuralists see the danger inherent in promoting one form of subjectivity over all others and opt instead for political resistance to be theoretically formulated against a backdrop of plurality.

Essentialism denies the multiplicity of possible subjectivities for which there are no universal guarantees or stable foundations. Instead of providing a foundation from which to contest power as modernists in the 19th century may have thought it would, human essence, says Michel Foucault has entailed the opposite, “a standard of normalization by which individuals are judged and condemned” (Foucault 1995: 183). Structuralist political orthodoxy may hold us back in the search for principles of social transformation. The obsession with stating that which is certainly correct leads to sometimes ridiculous propositions being made about natural human identities, providing grounding for grand strategies whilst leaving the diverse spectrum of openings for smaller-r emancipatory action largely overlooked in discourse. In criticising the Apollonian view of the structuralists, Foucault proclaims with regards to essentialism:

The problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a “we” in order to assert the principles one recognises and the values one accepts, or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a “we” possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the “we” must not be previous to the question. It can only be the result – and the necessarily temporary result – of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it (Foucault 1984).

Mechanisms of theoretical manipulation like those behind the universal idea of Man in classical anarchism forces single normative ideals as totalising events, a perfection which does not live up to reality and therefore “limit[s] the real radical innovativeness” of emancipatory philosophy and theory (Newman 2007: 4). This in turn forces emancipatory theory to rest the strength of its images on an ignorance of “the antagonism, disunity, and disequilibria of the forces at the heart of essence” (Newman 2001: 81). In this way, “[p]ost-structuralism should be taken as a series of

these limits [of humanism] – limits that can be worked through and built upon” (Newman 2001:160). Post-structuralist anarchism is no nostrum to these limits. This is clear from the opprobrious critique from those who see it as delivering an “un-nuanced” straw man of classical anarchism and modernism (Sasha 2003; Morris 2010). This sort of critique of post-anarchism is fuelled by the fact that modernist political ideologies are indeed highly textured, often containing strong accounts of essentialism and also anti-essentialism. Therefore for Cohn and Wilbur (2011), both naturalism and constructivism exist in traditional anarchist texts and make post-structuralism’s contribution to anarchism less novel than post-anarchist proponents like to admit to.

However, in jumping to the defence of anarchism’s classical image, I believe critics are too quick to portray post-anarchism as an attack on anarchism when in fact the post-anarchists seek to preserve the political ideal of anarchism *through* reviving its epistemological foundations in line with new turns in anti-authoritarian discourse *vis-à-vis* post-structuralism. Post-structuralist anarchism as I see it needs to be appraised not as a critique of theory within anarchism but as a critique of anarchism within the context of contemporary radical theory. I am not enough of a classical anarchist scholar to comment on the full encyclopaedia of its thought, but it is my sense that post-anarchism is not refuted in its impression that a general tendency exists within old anarchist discourses in which society is depicted as an organic wholeness with an imminent rationality and sociability. Working through ways of restating anarchism in a manner that does not rely on professorial closures brings us that much closer to developing theoretical frames of reference that can support tactics at the heart of radical movements today. It is by remembering the practical implications – particularly that “the prefigurative principle provides a procedure for action that does not rely upon transcendent moral concepts or totalised representations of human nature” (Jun 2008: 190) – that we can appreciate the virtue of anti-essentialist revisions.

The essentialist’s plight for natural human subjectivity compels us to imagine emancipation as the struggle between the uncontaminated human essences and the exterior domains of artificial power which it must overcome. Therefore discourses that employ humanism tend to emphasise institutional power as the main target. Post-structural thought however, particularly the contributions of Michel Foucault, has shown us that power is not necessarily institutional or formal but rather operates from a “non place”; power is “diffuse, variable and decentralised”

(Newman 2001:81). In other words post-anarchists have shown that a reliance on essentialism conceals the diffuse character of power and that revolutionary subjectivities are in reality infused and constituted by the very powers they seek to overthrow (May 1994:63; Patton 2000:8). In order to understand the 'impossibility of totalising change', the critique of humanism must be coupled with a critique of power. Post-anarchism's approach to power provides the ultimate node from which to theoretically reject a pure place of revolution. According to Saul Newman (2001:79), "Foucault's notion of dispersed power renders the idea of revolution as the final, dialectical overturning of power an anachronism."

2.4.3 Post-anarchism and power

What remains to be commented on in the argument against totalising revolution is a discussion of power. A structuralist description of domination would be that of a destructive force occupying an ontological domain alien to human nature. The major enterprise of modern political thinkers therefore was to solve how the external realm of power could or could not be justified in relation to the rest of society (Jun 2008: 157-159). For classical liberalism this solution took the form of rationalising the power of the State, for Marxists it was the capitalist class and for classical anarchists it was Religion, the State and Capital. Power was taken as a given externality, with an emphasis on pyramidal institutions and identifiable hierarchies (Gordon 2009: 145-146). The solutions which stemmed from these structural views of power shared in common two features that are distinctive of modernity: (i) they were regarded as universal solutions irrespective of particular social circumstances and (ii) they were transcendent solutions which stood above and apart from the real world they were meant to address (Jun 2008: 159). This remains as true for the modernistic idea of power as it does for subjectivity.

But we are a part of a different time, in which power and the political solutions to it are being conceived differently. The shift from modernist conceptions of power to postmodern conceptions of power is illustrated within the revival of anarchism through post-structural anarchism. In terms of power this means the move from 'old school' representations of power as top-down and exterior to life to 'new school' representations of it as heterogenous and everywhere. However new themes of power and subjectivity mark a shift in degree, not of kind. Modernism has not been neatly replaced by postmodernism or structuralism by post-structuralism; rather, gradually we are seeing a shift in emphasis. A postmodern conception of power does not fully dismiss the

idea that inequality is embedded within certain centralized forms of power but postmodernists hold that maintaining only a dichotomous view of power versus society to explain inequality has become one-dimensional. Post-structuralism suggests that power be emphasised not in the classical sense with “one top and one bottom” (Mueller 2003: 31) but for power to be seen as a web, a “multiplicity of force relations” manifesting in everyday interactions (Foucault 1990:92-94). To post-structuralists, power is better described by networks of practices than by concrete institutions. To quote Foucault:

The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state . . . but to liberate us both from the state *and* from the type of individualisation which is linked to the state (Foucault 1982: 335; own emphasis).

Between every point of the social body, between a man and a woman, between the members of a family, between a master and his pupil, between every one who knows and everyone who does not, there exists relations of power which are not purely and simply a projection of the sovereign’s great power (Foucault 1980: 187).

The post-structural dismantlement of essentialism is irreducibly connected with Foucauldian perspectives on power: Torffing (1999:61; own emphasis) elaborates:

In political terms the postmodern condition is associated with the abandonment of the notion of the universal rational subject who could act as an autonomous and self-willed agent in the political sphere. Instead, the subject is seen to be opaque even to himself – rather than transparent and unified as the Cartesian model would suggest. Moreover, the subject is shown to be *constituted* by the conditions that are often outside of his control; there can be no strict separation between the subject and the objective world.

Post-structuralism repudiates the insistence of many political theorists that human essence exists outside of the system and thereby forms the basis for pure revolution. To post-structuralists, any absolutist binary along the line of essence versus institution is more misleading of revolutionary possibility than it is elucidating. To post-structuralists, as I mentioned before, human subjectivity is not fixed. More so, subjectivity is constituted and reconstituted within the infrastructures of rule and therefore human nature is not uncontaminated by domination nor can it be the basis for

pure revolution! Pure revolution is impossible because power is constitutive of identity and therefore cannot be transcended in its entirety.

According to post-structural insights, human subjectivity is formed by systems of knowledge and truth. Systems of knowledge themselves are a result of power being exercised in the production and maintenance of certain notions of reality. Twenty-first century philosophy tells us that “the structure of knowledge is tied to the structure of language and to cultural practices of justification – it is not a given of the species” (May 1989: 174). What is constructed to be socially ‘true’ forms the boundaries of our subjectivity within society and what is deemed to be ‘true’ is constructed internally by power relations, therefore subjectivity is embroiled in social power. The subject is an effect of power-suffused knowledge systems. For Foucault (1980:132-133), “[k]nowledge’, that is the claim to know what ‘really’ is, is then a form of power”. In this sense, post-structuralism tells us that power precedes the subject; the subject is an effect of power not only through exercising within it but by being dominated by concepts of truth. The subject therefore is not ‘essential’, determined extrinsically and organically apart from power as ontological humanism holds; rather, it is constructed internally and contingently in (and to) webs of power relations. This underlines the ultimate undecideability of our identities with no pure human essence existing as a base for explanation. The very idea of a fixed subjectivity is a tool of domination:

[D]iscourses of knowledge about the human psyche is also a practice of power such that what has been read as a journey of scientific discovery can as easily be read as an increasingly subtle display of disciplinary technique. In the nexus of science and discipline, the subject as such is being constituted. An autonomy is ascribed to the subject, a realm of individual character that offers itself to others as material to be shaped into socially and politically acceptable patterns (Foucault 1980:57).

While fixed ideas are being criticised, it is important to acknowledge that such ideas to some degree always inform the basis for social and individual action. In other words people respond to the world with some fixed perception of their identity in relation to it. So in effect “concepts” (that is power-based representations of life) invariably form the basis of our actions. Therefore, with post-structuralism, power is recognised as productive as well as repressive contra to the binary dialectic of humanism. According to Foucault (1990:86), the “productive effectiveness,

the strategic usefulness and positivity” of power make it illogical to be viewed as a repressive space external to progressive interactions. Power ultimately constitutes human subjectivity and therefore is unavoidable. Its elimination is impossible. The proposed solution to new conceptions of revolution in theory lays in the assertion that the complete eradication of domination cannot form the basis for systemic social change.

According to the Nietzschean logic of *ressentiment*, the tendency to create a Manichean division between subjectivity and power is based on a weak sentimentality – a slave like morality where the weak reactively ground their own identity in absolute reference to the powerful whom they philosophically exclude from the supposedly pure consciousness of the oppressed. It is based on a history of the powerless redeeming themselves in an imaginary revolt against power by claiming excessive embodiments of virtue and goodness. Therefore radical humanism forms part of the scourge of *ressentiment* where the oppressed tie themselves to a system of thinking in which their goodness can only be affirmed relative to an opposite force. This is a form of moral resistance which to Nietzsche lacked any creativity and simply affirmed the identity which the weak sought to destroy (Nietzsche 1994: cited in Newman 2005a:31-33). The bluff of essentialism has been called, due to post-structuralism; it is in the twenty-first century becoming indefensible to proclaim either universal subjectivity or/and a metaphysical domain of power as the groundwork for emancipatory politics. We now can understand that “power relations are plural and emerge from a multitude of points; and moreover, that power is productive rather than simply repressive, producing even the very subject who at the same time resists it” (Newman 2005a:42). This means that we must acknowledge that

There is no possibility of a society freed from the dislocations of power and based on entirely equal social relations, as the classical anarchists imagined ... [I]ndeed, any attempt to eliminate these entirely would itself be a form of domination. There is no essential commonality at the base of society, no system inherent in human sociability upon which a fully reconciled social order could be established (Newman 2005a: 42).

The task of revolutionary theorists today then is to find ways of affirming this world of irreducible power, and out of it still create a new system of values.

To an important extent classical anarchism and its depiction of multifarious sites of domination makes it a significant historical precursor to post-structural views of power. To quote May (1989: 169): “Within the anarchist tradition, the concept of politics is wider than it is within either Marxism or liberalism”. Marxists and liberals interpreted power as emanating from unitary loci namely class and the state respectively, whereas classical anarchists recognised long ago the intermeshing roles of state, church and economy in oppression. While the classical anarchists were more progressive than their contemporaries in viewing power as emanating from more than a single locus, they still largely portrayed power as mechanical interventions as opposed to systems of social relations. Power may have been multiple with the classical anarchists but the multiple forms of power were still largely portrayed as a part of a separate ontological order to human beings. The “subject of emancipation” (fundamental human nature) in traditional anarchism is conflictually portrayed as being as pure of power as it is oppressed by it, and has thus always problematically “implied an [extrinsic] relationship of dependence on the very identity it opposes” (Newman 2005a: 39) and seeks to escape.

The post-anarchists of this century have attempted to infuse into anarchism the idea of power as an embedded relation, a heterogeneous, multi-sited matrix, constitutive of subjects – and ultimately inescapable. Post-anarchists suggest that the imaginary (in anarchism) be distanced from its classical roots in humanism where revolutionary change is described as scientific and apparent, and that it be brought closer to post-structuralism where there exists a stronger appreciation for the multiplicity of identities, the indeterminacy of history and the omninclusivity of different “capillaries of power” (Gordon 2009: 14-49).

For radical politics, then, post-structuralism has major implications particularly in providing a theory-based justification for a general non-totalising panorama for anti-capitalist revolution. This is achieved by posing, against dominant discourses, the idea of non-essential subjectivities and their relationship to networks (not singular loci) of power. If critical theory in contemporary times tells us that the complete eradication of domination at single points is not likely, then we need to rethink the capital “R” ideal of revolutionary rupture. This is in effect an invitation to explore the potentiality of social movements which seek transformations which do not abide by historical and theoretical certainties. The acceptance of power as a changing and ineradicable dimension in any social identity is linked with forms of subversion which do not aim for en-

masse or permanent effects but a different type of change, to be explored in the following chapter. Overall I believe we are situated in an era of post-structural politics in action – where social movements attempt to negotiate their autonomy from power, and not radically eliminate power as a whole.

These conceptualisations of power should give rise to new socio-political theories and praxes, promising of new phenomena for studies underwritten by an emergent post-structural-anarchistic ethos. Post-structuralist anarchists – believing in the promise of a more free society but also in the fluidity of identity – have heretofore established the critique of essentialism and power on which we must attempt different conceptions of revolution “outside of the realm of inconceivable thought and into the realm of possibility” (Shukaitis 2010: 304). Today various non-hierarchical and autonomous social movements and theories spark ideas of social change that leave triumphal totalisation in the past, pointing to visions that once again seem rooted in the realness and fragmentation of our realities. For those who believe revolutionary change is still important the task is now “to invent a new utopianism, rooted in contemporary forces, for which – at the risk of seeming to encourage a return to idealistic political vision – it will be necessary to create new kinds of movement” (Bourdieu and Grass 2002: 67).

2.4.4 This is not a defeat by nihilism, but a renewal by open-endedness

Up until now this thesis has focused on how activism and theory have urged a shift away from defining revolution as complete and towards a redefinition of revolution as interstitial. It is important to note that the tactic of prefiguration and its conditions of experimentality, non-hierarchicalism and open-endedness have been declared priorities. By declaring these priorities, my position assumes that socialist ideals can be maintained within an environment of open-endedness. Reflecting on these arguments, it would seem imperative to respond to the charge made by detractors who hold that post-structuralism cannot assume priorities or, as the post-anarchists attempt to do, form the basis of a meaningful political practice, because its open-endedness amounts to little more than relativistic nihilism.

Post-structuralism has often been associated with nihilism. It has been called a “dead end for progressive thought” by conservative leftists who view its insistence on non-universal truth as irreconcilable with the solidarity principles needed for social change (Eagleton 1995; Epstein

1995; 1997). When post-structuralism is combined with the tradition of anarchism, which itself has historically enervated the left with its lack of uniformity, the resultant framework of ‘open anarchism’ or ‘post-anarchism’ is often received as an irrelevant distraction from more progressive solutions. A generation of thinkers privileging experimentation, a focus on the present, and a dismissal of holisms are seen to offer nothing stable enough from which to build unity around collectivism. More so, critics such as Eagleton (2003:118) have argued that questioning foundations and essentialist identity is easily accommodated within neo-liberal capitalism – a system which itself depends on the fluidity and contingency of unfixed social identities. In addition, post-structural conclusions that subjects cannot exist outside of the workings of power and therefore one system cannot simply be purged of domination and replaced by a purer one, if viewed from a certain angle, can be distorted as toothless bourgeois propaganda. I argue against this by saying that post-structural critiques of representation fused with acts of anarchistic prefiguration can have very strong ethico-political implications for radicalism, but this only occurs when the duty of socio-political theory is perceived differently.

The charge of nihilism is based on a particular perception of the role of discourse. The Enlightenment paradigm has influenced radical politics for so long, binding its thinkers to an insularity role which “denied difference and swallowed up the particular in the name of the universal” (Newman 2005a:135) and making offensive any stream of thought which sought to prioritise plurality, uncertainty and openness. The intellectual atmosphere to come of this has been steeped in predetermination, with the resultant role of discourse seemingly to stake claim upon some pre-existing foundation in order to meet some pre-determined end. In seminal papers, *Is post-structuralist theory anarchist?* (1989) and *The politics of post-anarchism* (2010b), Todd May and Saul Newman respectively describe the insularism at the heart of discourse’s traditional role of predetermination:

The assumption behind [the charge of nihilism] is that in order to engage in political philosophy adequately, one must first possess a set of values which are generally accepted. Then, one must construct one’s political philosophy using those values as foundations (May 1989: 168).

This is pursued in order to find “[a] rational fullness: one that is either lost and needs to be recovered, or one that will be realised in the future through a process of dialectical development” (Newman 2010b:157).

Because the traditional intellectual atmosphere of predetermination is so deep-rooted within the ‘social sciences’, many academics shy away from studies which do not have the potential to be proscriptive. We are taught that the most useful generalisations we can make are those that found formal principles for stable social standards with recourse to scientific foundations. Therefore, in the dominant realm where theory is the closure of social phenomena through the delivery of authoritarian claims, paradigms which prop up specificities, difference and indeterminacy will appear toothless and out of sync. When and where we regard the ultimate aim of emancipatory theory to be about determining the future of all humanity, then theories which revolve around concrete phronesis for *only* specific situations will seem without value. And so the charge of nihilism is based on the view that radical theory is best fulfilling its duty when hard universal prescriptions can be made. This allegiance to factious theorisation has come at the great cost of “injustice to multiplicity” (Silverman 2002:74). While academics continue to operate within their chosen forts of abstraction, competing against one another to model a perfectionist dream of frictionless solidarity better than the next, the real radical struggles which never culminate in pure revolution go under-theorised.

According to Dempsey and Rowe (2004:33) “post-structural insights can enliven the left by helping academics to practice theory differently”. Post-anarchism particularly brings theory closer to contemporary action. Communities and radical groups in everyday moments prefigure the terms for a more egalitarian society through the creation of workers collectives, community-controlled land trusts, non-statist municipalities, communes and participatory economies amidst a host of other activities which “create the new world in the shell of the old”⁸. Hence new forms of relating to one another are attempted and new identities birthed, involving radical transformative action without certainties or grandiosity. Imperfection is granted, in fact, and failures are seen as necessary as we discover the path of recreating our societies as we go along.

⁸ A slogan associated with the Industrial Workers of The World also called the ‘Wobblies’, an international trade union with strong anarchist influences and history.

Theories which posit static categories for revolution are loath to understand that the academic habit of declaring fixities reflects the “undiagnosed religiosity” of modernism (Stirner 1995:45-46; cited in Newman 2010b: 159).

Benjamin Franks (2008) argues that our reasoning of ‘revolution’ must be shown to be “generated and supportive of the social practices of which it is a part ... [A]xioms of classical logic may represent stable features of established practices but this does not mean that they are universal” (Franks 2008:13). Relying on a single logos whitewashes our understanding of ‘revolution’, concealing the revolutionary appeal of the unexpected and thus detracting attention from the radical (but incremental and ‘unscientific’) events of our time. Visionary anarchist Gustav Landauer (1978:62; own emphasis) says that social practices have their own logic which is driven by uncertainty and theory must attempt to overlap with this logic, not contain it within false completeness:

Anyone who thinks that *faith in fulfilment* is part of the great visionary behaviour and urgent creativity of mankind, knows them badly. Faith is certainly a part of it, but also despair in men and the feeling of impossibility! Where overwhelming change and renewal have occurred, it is the impossible and incredible that is precisely the usual factor that brought about change.

It is not convergence to norms but fractures developed through spontaneous social action which defines social transgression till now; this post-structuralism recognises and remarks on:

I would like to say something about the function of any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present ... Any description must always be made in accordance with these kinds of virtual fractures which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, that is, of possible transformation (Foucault 1988: 36).

Now that we have in this and the past chapter exposed reasons for why revolution’s classical meaning is riddled with anachronisms and dead weight, we ask ourselves, how *do* we then answer what ‘revolution’ encompasses as a general sociological concept today? How do we ascribe the setting, that is, the overall space and the temporal character of radical social transformation without containing descriptions within permanent truths? If revolution is a series of flux and openings emerging from an uncapturable logic of social transgressions, then how is it

possible to practice theory and use concepts in the name of revolution and simultaneously pay homage to the flux at the heart of its reality? These are the questions that I will explore in the following chapter (Chapter Three). This is the beauty that I wish to bring to the fore – general theories of social transformation can avoid prescriptive universalisations.

What interesting times. We now face the task of maintaining left idealism within an environment which has accepted the impossibility of a perfectly free world. Is this really a moment of nihilistic defeat? Or is it actually a passage of maturity for left theory – where we learn to defend our desire for a better system of existence without the charade of scientific certainty. Is it really nihilism? Or is it an opportunity for a new generation of radical thinkers to confront what was ignored in the past, namely, how to be honest academically about what it means to defend a struggle for change with universal guarantees. Refraining from depicting pictures of revolutionary certainty in theory anymore does not mean we cannot create pictures of revolution at all. As long as social movements continue to reflect the criticisms made against universalism, the task of theory to catch up to action will continue – and for the sake of open-endedness it is possibly a question that needs to remain unresolved. I have not yet answered *how* we may present open-ended general theories of revolution. This is covered in Chapter Three.

2.5 Conclusion

Post-structural analysis is not as Castoridias (2001:17) claims a symbol of this generation's hopeless inability to define itself as anything *tout court* – only able to refer to ourselves in terms of “post-”. The “post” prefix is unfortunate because it alludes to something backward-looking when it is rather better considered as a transitory, if not forward-looking, attitude. And it is a far more positive attitude than many assume it to be. Post-structuralism is certainly not a system of thought without values and contemporary anarchism helps us to see this. Anarchism captures the spirit of contemporary movements (as put forward in Chapter One) and it captures the political spirit of post-structuralism (as argued in Chapter Two). Therefore it can be concluded that the political spirit of post-structuralism is reflected in contemporary movements via their shared anarchist commitment to non-dictatorial radical politics.

Post-structuralism tells us that society is definitively not an objective reality whose workings can be revealed scientifically. Therefore we cannot sustain radical politics based on fixed identities

and essential paths. This is because society itself is not an intelligible whole but is always in the process of being constituted by representations (Newman 2007: 13). Thus we need to address the authoritarianism inherent within radical political categorisations themselves. This has both hopeful and pessimistic sides to it. It shows the dissatisfaction of people with a discursive system which promotes claims of homogeneity and completeness from intellectual vanguards who persist in spite of the increasingly relentless complexity of the actual world and its possibilities. It asks us to look for ideas and ways of stimulating progressive action which do not fall into the normalisation, domination and prescription of previous centuries. In other words, it entails a demand to reverse the axiom “truth is one, and only error is multiple” so that we now observe error is one, and only truth is multiple” (Siebers 1994:21).

Post-structuralism is an extreme form of many different contemporary trends (from Open Marxism to Critical Realism and other schools) which also try to incorporate a less dogmatic approach to questions of radical change. There are a host of other ‘post-modern’ strands of emancipatory thought. But it is particularly the extremity of post-structuralism through which we can see in bold terms the symbols of a fresh upturn in knowledge and politics. It allows us to see clearly the greatness of the limitation of the old story of emancipation of the human essence versus the external world.

I am not saying that forces worthy of contestation do not powerfully manifest as external institutions which can be targeted, or that the desire for change does not emanate from within. Structures of domination are indeed real; they exist to extract from human beings resources which once used for the sustenance of power are not available for the comforts of ordinary people and, as man is, so is nature an object of mastery. So yes, injustices are material and common spirits of resistance do arise and we rejoice in them. But we must not jump too quickly from the existence of widespread presence of oppression to claiming common allegiances, essential agencies and unified futures. The connection between the two is not as obvious as hypostasised socialist theory once implied.

Furthermore, as discussed, the inextricable desire for justice is always up against similarly inextricable presences of power. For actors therefore the ‘answer’ if such a thing should exist is unlikely to be represented by an eschatological point of perfection. To all of this which post-structuralism relinquishes, Chapter Three will add a view of what its politics may in turn adopt.

Chapter Three therefore looks at which terms and questions are central to generating a new set of revolutionary pictures based on the critiques made until now.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE PURSUIT OF THE PRESENT: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY HETEROTOPIAS

“Transgression can only be ephemeral: it burns itself up once it has passed the limit and only exists insofar as the limit itself exists. Therefore, transgression can only be a critique conducted upon limits: it can only expose the limits which give rise to it and limit it” – 21st century post-anarchist, Saul Newman (2001:90)

3.1 Introduction

If we abandon the ideas of an innately transcendent human essence and that the power we need to eradicate exists external to this essence (as suggested in Chapter Two), then we are in a place ontologically where our mental images of what social revolution means must change from the old avatar: the battle between light and dark culminating in a final instant of social redemption. While this light-dark notion of transcendental change may no longer be defended arrantly, the assumptions which underlie its vision such as certainty, absolutism, eschatology and moral universality still haunt leftist discourse.

Post-structuralism today offers us a corrective to these meta-theoretical assumptions of capital “R” revolution whilst influential movements affirm the desirability of ethical open-endedness in action. Together, as I have discussed in the previous two chapters, they offer grounds for questioning old associations, but they do so tentatively without necessarily providing ready-made suggestions for alternative principles. They make more explicit the problematic nature of embarking on a journey towards freedom and worthwhile life while insisting that the meaning of revolution be decided prior to action and for everyone. Post-structural politics makes the clear utterance that, because power works within and through us, it is within and through ourselves and our relationships which we must re-organise experimentally for situations which are different, but not less complex, than the status quo. Post-structural politics challenges us to come up with inspiring concepts for how we may theorise radical change without reducing the battle against capitalism, in its economic and state forms, to medicines and nostrums.

In Chapter Three I take up the task of outlining how alternative visions may be structured so as to categorise some of this complexity. I will continue an earlier line of argument that post-structuralism in radical political thought does not encourage indolence of the intellect with the subtext of promoting chaos or inertia as is sometimes alleged, but the opposite: by encouraging creativity over entropy it gives left theory somewhere new to journey, in a direction of experimentation left electrified by uncertainties. Chapters One and Two were about the negation of modernist discourse. In Chapter Three the discussion takes a constructive turn, as I suggest “How” we can rethink revolution. In starting to draw a post-anarchist iconography of transformative social change, I will confront the following:

- A new conception of utopia in the form of heterotopias (in Section 3.2);
- The post-structural anarchist’s prescriptions for action (in Section 3.3); and
- Devolving heterotopia: spatio-temporal pillars for new discourse (3.4).

This chapter begins by establishing utopianism as the common backdrop to all theories of social change. In the next section of Chapter Three’s discussion, I define a shift from classical utopianism rooted in modernist perspectives to post-structural utopianism rooted in heterotopias. From this I argue that heterotopianism is a better way than traditional utopias to accommodate the potential of autonomous anarchistic movements today. In the following section (section 3.3), I outline how post-anarchism, with its focus on ethics and the micro-social, ultimately makes it more fitted to capturing inward-looking prefiguration than classical anarchism which too often relayed the story of revolution in the classical language of macro-social impetuses for universal morality. Post-anarchism therefore can be seen as a first generation instalment for new open-ended revolutionary discourse. In section 3.4, I extrapolate constructive features which epitomise the post-anarchist heterotopia. The three conceptual pillars I propose combine to form a basis for thinking about resistance against power while being rooted in situations of in-eliminable power. Thus far in the thesis we have faced up to the reality of incomplete revolution in action and in theory, and ask in Chapter Three what terms can now be used to positively set the tone for future discussion which moves us beyond just an acceptance of non-totalising change towards something more optimistic. I suggest three conceptual pillars for the future – what it means to operate in the chasms of power (3.4.1), what it means to be autonomous of the state (3.4.2) and

finally debating how we can conceive of the temporal effects (3.4.3) of these interstitial arrangements. Chapter Three is all about establishing spatio-temporal landmarks based on the critiques waged thus far. The three pillars which I mention above and introduce in section 3.4 attempt to break the brittle carapace of modern Revolution, but also act as positive fault-lines between modern and post-modern thought. It is a chapter which seeks to look ahead.

3.2 A new conception of utopia in the form of heterotopias

In the thesis we have seen how political processes which transgress the social system can be understood via levers other than the essentialised objective aspirations of the modern era. It seems that theorists and activists are no longer entirely convinced by ideas of sharp discontinuities and universalities as the defining images of revolution, appearing to opt instead for experimenting with the underlying structures of social relations gradually and cumulatively with a focus on what can be experienced rather than predicted. In other words the popular nature of anti-capitalism is changing away from discipline and centrism – people are thinking differently. A changing idea of revolution is a component of a changing political imaginary; and moving in a direction very different to traditional communism. This I identify as a shift in popular utopianism.

Utopianism is “when the prospect of a vastly better world captures the imagination... seeking clear alternatives to the status quo, alternatives to the existing system” (Hoffman 2009:56 cited in Friedman 2010: 1). All political theory is in some way utopian. All political commentary and critiques are embedded with a sense of utopianism, a sense of what ‘more’ and ‘better’ could mean for the world. Utopianism is useful, as it is a mentality without which critical social evaluation about the future and our capacities for change would be impossible. However, utopianism by definition refers to a system which is not proximal to our immediate realities and thus runs the risk of simply being impractical. When we become interested in the prospects for a better world we must hold utopianism in balance, between the Scylla of being optimistic and the Charybdis of losing touch with the actual avenues at our disposal. It is my belief that modern socialism’s aspirations of vanquishing evil and liberating society once-and-for-all errs on the side of Charybdis.

There is a totalitarian way and a non-totalitarian way of thinking about utopianism. Classical utopianism generally captures the totalitarian way of imagining ‘the good society’. Assumptions about the role of theory stemming from Enlightenment thought (Chapter Two) lent itself to totalitarian utopianism where all of society is the imagined object of transformation planned for along some superior blueprinted trajectory. Opposite forms of utopianism, namely heterotopias, entail the post-structural version: non-totalising, situational, incomplete transformations. Heterotopias provide a wonderful enveloping concept for creating images of possibility for schools of thought like post-anarchism which appeal to social change not rooted in scientific objectivism. In order to understand the transition to non-eschatological imaginaries we must acknowledge the shift between blueprint utopianism and heterotopianism in parallel with the shifts between closed-ended and open-ended radical politics (Chapter One) and structuralism and post-structuralism (Chapter Two).

3.2.1 Classical Utopia

Utopia is an image of destination – it is the place we imagine when we imagine society at a state of orgiastic perfection and the social conditions sustaining this nirvana. Utopia is an etymological fusion of ‘outopia’ which means ‘nowhere’ and ‘eutopia’ meaning ‘good place’. Utopia is everywhere, in the hearts of those who desire and in the minds of those who plan for developments; it is the substance behind our will to transform. As an ideal, it is omnipresent. As a destination, it is unattainable. In the original “Utopia”, Thomas More who coined the word in 1516 wittily describes the island of Utopia – romanticising a perfect island where no inequalities existed, always implying a place on the map but one whose bearings were impossible to find. In a world which praises knowing things for certain, the utopian imagination has always been a brave act. To envision utopia is to imagine a future which is not rooted in the continuities of the present. It is to reject the status quo, and to refer a new future to idealism, a perimeter beyond the fence of ‘reality’.

The creator of the word utopia, Thomas More imagined a new world, a fiction so intimidating and threatening to the British monarchy that it resulted in his beheading. More’s demise reflects how seriously authorities regard the divine muscle of utopianism, and its capacity to reach across social life in ways that they cannot anticipate. The guardians of a system, those interested in preserving a regime, its codification of rules, processes of selection and socialisation, will do

what it takes to create the impression that we are operating within the limits of our capacities and therefore social alternatives can be merely managed re-compositions of existing arrangements. This is exemplified by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's infamous anti-utopian dictum at the turn of the century that, "There is no alternative". Anything that promotes states of society which are too different, that suggests the passion of ordinary people as the basis for life's reorganisation and that envisages alternative distributions of resources and new forms of communality, are compared to the present and often declared unreasonable. The result has tended to be the subjugation of ancillary organisation to the patient waiting of ordinary people for the correct model from economists and the best-practice policy from politicians to determine their futures. In *Journey through Utopia*, Marie Louise Berneri (1971:1) defines utopianism as the most sublime consciousness in an "age of compromises, of half-measures, of the lesser evil. Where visionaries are derided or despised, and 'practical men' rule our lives".

But there is an oddity about utopias. For as much as they have sought to challenge the completeness and managerialism of the status quo, they have traditionally taken the form of complete models themselves. This may have been a defensive strategy to the label of dreamers and un-analytical speculators. Whatever the reason, from Plato's *Republic* (360 BC) to More's *Utopia* (1516) and Andreae's *Christianopolis* (1619), traditional Utopian philosophy has had the characteristic of framing emancipation in terms of totalitarian spaces. A history in radical sociology of presenting all-encompassing dissolutions of one existing system and its complete replacement along a superior trajectory by another is still wagered by many radical thinkers today who answer to what change may mean as "replacing everything in common": "Moving beyond capitalism and states would entail nothing less than turning the world upside down, breaking up all monopolies, and reconstructing everything in common from institutions to ethics to everyday life" (Millstein 2010:33).

So while utopianism invokes the spirited imagination of those who challenge the existing social order and is indispensable as a political tool because of this, there are troubles which have made it lose political currency – such as its own contradictory decadence. In viewing new societies, traditional utopias tended to engage in an abstract sketching of perfect, static, states. These encapsulations of post-transcendence are steeped in the modern residue of the 'grand plan'.

Structuring utopianism predominantly in terms of the salvation of all humanity involves major setbacks for the emancipatory project.

Orthodox Marxists are well-known for fighting the concept of utopianism which they associated with unscientific socialism. But while they proclaim this correlation from utopian socialism, they advocated the very structure of traditional utopianism shared by “19th century thinkers where utopia whether or not so called, was a thing of the future, a culmination of historical evolution, a mass state... more or less inevitable” (Kumar 1987: 109). Marxism prides itself on a classical feature of utopia – the end-point of social fulfilment – which is used as a vehicle for intellectual vanguardism. Fixed end-points give rise to theorists and ideologues who have historically “installed themselves as the sole arbiters of salvations requirements”: “revolutionary elites emboldened by the totalitarian claims of fulfilling human history have imposed themselves on society in exchange for obedience” (Friedman 2010:2).

To see humanity as the simplistic and easily manipulable mass suggested by modern utopias resembles the programmatic thinking behind authoritarian, not egalitarian, regimes. According to Winter (2006: 3), one of the greatest flaws of the classical Utopia is that it describes in precise detail what revolution would mean and, in order to be this specific, utopian thinkers tend to employ the language of discipline as derived from current social and political forms and thereby reaffirm the present more than escape it. Marxism is indicative of this, relying on bourgeois institutions and ideas to outline for the purposes and pleasure of specificity the imaginary new world through repeating concepts of control such as factory discipline, industrial technology and the state. Blueprint utopias fixate on ‘what will be’ and tend to over-emphasise the regulation of change via vanguards by resting on the instrumentalist terms of the current day. This is evident in left theory like orthodox Marxism which concentrates on “first winning [and maintaining] power and then creating a society worthy of humanity” (Holloway 2002:18).

To Martin Parker (2002:2), we are stunted in our imagination of alternatives the instant we cast our imagination of socialism in the megalomania of past discourses which make it hard to recognise that “organising can be done in a number of unexpected ways, not narrowed down to one predicted best way”. Entrenched principles of totalitarian utopianism not only promote vanguardism, but deny diversity by cementing the search of perfection as a goal of society. Friedman (2010) makes the fascinating allegation that perfectionism is anti-democratic, because

it promotes the “illusion that we can finally dispense with the notion of antagonism” (Mouffe 1993: 2 cited in Friedman 2010: 5). I agree that a view which fosters aims of absolute cohesion will eventually aim to suppress voices of opposition to its own. Difference and imperfection have never been the problem. Hierarchy in society is the root problem, and the structures of classical utopias have appeared to promote hierarchy and undermine the idea of plurality.

In essence classical ideas of utopia repeat the mistakes of representationalism central to the critiques made by the post-structural movement, which rejects the imposition of narrow universalities on people as images of themselves. The post-structuralist viewpoint is that massive changes on a totalising scale and the replacement of one grand regime by a new one masquerading as yet another final answer do not necessarily change the structure of social relations and in fact stand a good chance of preserving relations of oppression through perpetuating hierarchical forms of knowledge. My approach is consistent with Foucault (cited in Newman 2009a:75) who argues that: “It was the Utopian desire itself that led to the undermining of the revolution – the lost opportunity for real transformation of social conditions”.

To be clear, this is not to parade a degree of ‘post-utopianism’ wherein we no longer believe in the necessity of idealism for social endeavours, but rather implies that our “speaking pictures” or “utopias” reflect the real imperfect possibilities at our disposal so that we no longer see the promised land as achievable only once we become more perfect, more the same, and more able to follow new formula and discipline. To move beyond that portrayal of disciplined utopias, theories are becoming more intent on the constitution of emancipation as a movement and not a scientific result, so that in the twenty-first century, a call echoes to move away from “projected utopias” to “enacted utopias” (Newman 2009a: 76; 83) or from “major utopias” to “minor utopias” (Winter 2006: 4-5). Hetherington (1997) speaks of the importance of social margins in composing contemporary utopianism. This factors into the promotion of radicalisations detailed in incremental change so that a type of utopianism can be conjured which is more relatable to real activity in the margins of actual society, rather than utopia as an intellectual mechanism of perfection. To Jay Winter (2006:5), in *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the Twentieth Century*, minor utopias in the margins of society are the “[i]maginings of liberations usually on a smaller scale, without the grandiose pretensions or almost unimaginable hubris of the major utopian projects”.

However, thinkers such as Gardiner (1997:112) express the concern that post-structuralism is ill-equipped to accommodate utopias of socialism because of the “loss of future” which some predict to accompany its emphasis on present-based transformation. To give up on concrete ideas of the future (freedom) seemingly entails giving up concrete ideas of the present (oppression) and puts us in a quagmire in terms of intellectual leadership. But do we need to have authoritative installations of certainty for alternatives that do not possess any tropes for true positivism? Is it not more urgent that we describe the concept of revolution, not as a universal catch-all, but as real places within society as it currently is? I forward that the most usable way of describing utopias in revolutionary discourse today is not in terms of certain futures but in terms of the uncertain present and its potential for multiple ‘counter-sites’. This entails using Foucault’s notion of heterotopias.

3.2.2 Heterotopia

Heterotopia is post-structuralism’s most explicit contribution to utopian thought. Foucault introduced heterotopia via his lecture *Of Other Spaces* (1967) and later as an introduction to *The Order of Things* (1989). At the time of his death, the term was still a formulation of incipience with the two seminal works implying different meanings for the term. However, according to Genocchio (1995), there was nonetheless “a strange consistency” in the use of heterotopias: “The distinguishing feature of the heterotopia is [that it enables]... a form of discontinuity... a status which, in turn, gives each [heterotopian space] the ability to transgress, undermine and question the alleged totality of self-contained systems” (Genocchio 1995:37).

It is clear that heterotopia is a spatial concept describing spaces of non-totalitarian social change in a micro-level interpretation of utopias. Others have defined the heterotopia as:

A real space which seizes and activates the imagination through the inversion of the culture of which it is a part (Foucault 1986).

Material spaces where radical practices dislocate the normative configurations of society through difference and multiplicity (Gonick and Hladki 2005).

Sites which are marginalised in the dominant spatialisation (Lefebvre 1991).

Spaces where utopian desires are realised in the here and now of the present (Shantz 2010: 135).

Heterotopia is a space of local subversion located in material reality, a concept denoting social, political and cultural alteration with an emphasis on dislocation, unevenness and re-ordering. It is an alternative to the blueprints of classical utopias and their compulsion to tell the process of change as if through a crystal ball. With heterotopias, social parameters are re-adjusted in processes of transformation and cannot be foretold; hence, the limits and possibilities of anti-systemism are conceived in lively motion, not as fixed images of militant perfection. Heterotopias point out that “a smooth space will never suffice to save us” (Deleuze and Guatarri 1987: 500) and therefore we need to break away from the crystal balls of discourse if we are ever to refer to utopias of social transformation in ways that appeal to our complex present.

By referring to utopias in terms of space, as heterotopia does, we invite the idealistic political imaginary into the present. In the last twenty years we have confronted the following wisdoms about space: space embodies sets of social relations constructed within society; power is performed through spatial relations and encoded in the representations of space; and spatial relations are contested and where there may be a dominant ideology there always exists the possibility for resistance left open within interstitial spaces and the opportunity they offer for counter-hegemonic representations of space (Hetherington 1997: 20-25). To Michel Foucault (1987), heterotopia reflects contemporary wisdoms about space and reaffirms our epoch as one in which space takes the non-physical form of exchanges between sites, people and discourses. The fascination with space in the twenty-first century is divergent from the trend of emplacement where in the past discrete geographical places – the urban place, the rural place, the government place, the civil society place, the sacred place, the profane place, the celestial place, the supercelestial place – all took precedence over ‘space’. The heterotopia is not just a physical place, as it is a space of social (re)construction, experience and translation. Space is how we do things together and how we think things together. Space is a collective act of imagination, and is therefore deeply political:

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic... Space has been shaped and moulded from historical and natural

elements, but this has always been a political process. Space is political. It is literally filled with ideologies (Lefebvre 1976:31).

According to Hook and Vrdoljak (2002), there is the high-order understanding of the heterotopia as an analytics of social life, a broad way of looking at the world of social change. As analytics, heterotopia sees any fundamental (dis)ordering and (dis)organizing of society to be determined by those forces which are anomalous to ordinary space. 'Heterotopia' originally described that part of the human body that is out of place, missing, extra or like tumours, alien (Hetherington 1997: 42). In social terms it is used to denote how those who illicit moments of abnormality in society can generate potentially new forms of knowledge and that this process constitutes a living utopia.

The aim of heterotopias therefore is to challenge existing social relations whereas the aim of classical utopias is to anticipate total freedom. Heterotopia highlights the paths and visions made present by the enclaves of new, strange social orderings in particular spaces Like a passing ship exploring an ocean much greater than itself, the heterotopia is the ship, nomadic, isolated of normal perception, pushing limits, discovering, but embedded in the ocean nonetheless; it can discover new territory and open up possibilities but it will never be independent of the great ocean. It cannot resolve that which it is dependent upon in the same way that radical acts of difference (such as autonomous and anti-statist communities) cannot purify the entire system. It is explained by Michel Foucault (1986) as, "[a] floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea".

Heterotopia shows that where we are at, is already a profound intersection of imaginations – our tangible reality here-and-now already a powerful manifestation of utopian thinking – so that utopian possibility is a thing of the present not of the future. Heterotopias are spaces in which what it means to be a social being is re-imagined, undone and re-enacted for a moment within the current domicile of that which has long defined humanity and may long still remain. They are spaces which present powerful material glimpses of what could be but do not guarantee permanent change. We must note, as belief in the heterotopia encourages us to, that complete transformation does not necessarily equal deep transformation. Heterotopias privilege minor relations which are leveraged above power- and knowledge-as-usual. The advocacy of

heterotopian moments is the belief that society will undergo deep transformation through unexpected and anomalous path changes over time, not institutionalised power-centric crushings. The radical exceptions which blossom into social change, the transgressive elements in the margins and the lone ships cutting through the great ocean, are in what we should vest our desire for a radical new future.

But heterotopias are not all abstract spatialisation; if this were the case, they would resemble the stark removal from real life which we have taken issue with as the main unattractiveness of classical utopia. Heterotopias ought to reflect positions in the 'real-world'. And they do, according to Foucault, as they "possess precise and well-defined functions within society" (Hook and Vrdoljak 2002: 199). There are distinct qualities which make heterotopias an obvious starting point for understanding conceptually acts of resistance such as prefiguration.

For one, heterotopias are exceptional spaces which are always in interaction with other 'common' spaces. To Foucault (1997: 354 cited in: Hook and Vrdoljak 2002: 205), heterotopia is always "juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible". In heterotopic space the acts which define a glimpse of the 'good society' are *not* sanctified of the current social situation. As a social laboratory, heterotopia is a juxtaposition of heterogeneous combinations of events, perceptions and spaces. It is not defined in and of itself by virtue of some essential separation; it only has the quality of improvement because of its interaction with what exists. This is a picture of utopia as a comparative state of transcendence, not a complete disjuncture. Heterotopias are anomalous spaces within the social body, as they are not completely new bodies (as with classical utopias). For Kevin Hetherington (1997:7-9) in *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* this is useful for our analysis of movements because it overcomes the simple polarisation between centre and margin, between order and resistance. It allows us to see that even dramatic transformations do not separate and divide social space for good (light from dark; or essence from power) but rather emerge from, through and end up in interdependent paradoxical contexts. This reinforces the post-structural perception of control as inescapable, rhizomatic and immanent to every relation. With heterotopias the ambivalence between freedom and control is a necessary starting point for considering contemporary utopianism, disallowing simple categorisations of a pure path to a pure society. The pastiche of real space which makes up heterotopia is a conceptual reminder

that the creation of the 'freedom' we aspire to, takes place within "a complex simultaneity of difference" not a seamless whole (Soja 1995: 15).

A second useful quality of moulding our concepts of social change through the idea of heterotopia (as opposed to utopia), is that it does not only represent a junction amongst existing sites but it also stands above (or in excess to) these sites. Therefore with heterotopia, we see sites of resistance as a mediation between the inside (dominant practices) and the outside (experimental practices), and not a clean break from the present. In fact the real spaces which it combines produce unsmooth combinations in order to give rise to "embodied discontinuities" (Genocchio 1995) from which "something new and unheard of may emerge" (Voela 2011: 171).

So it is a utopia which is based in the reality of that which does not yet exist but may emerge from the material practices in the present, as opposed to a utopia which is based on a coherent and certain description set in the future. It is a zone of destabilisation which links the inside and the outside simultaneously and showing how change really occurs when social relations "sidestep the societal common ground while standing on it" (Liggett 2003: 44). As Foucault tells us (1967):

Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.

Hook and Vrdoljak (2002) further explain the inside-and-outside quality by saying that heterotopia is "in excessive of the normative standards of a sociocultural location". This quality of being attached to but exceeding normality is distinctive of heterotopia where proto-cultural spaces are performed in the porous perimeters between domination and resistance. By combining the aim of transcendence with a rootedness in the institutions of the present, heterotopian social activity acts as a mirror. The excesses above normality which heterotopias produce expose the usual as peculiar and the established as irresolute so that space is interfused with transformative potential.

Local heterotopian spaces create webs of processes and understandings which are not contained by dominant meanings, but spill out and alter society idiomatically. These diverse "miniature

movements” (Klein 2000:2) which occupy spaces of otherness are how revolutionary alternatives have come about – not as “artificially created islands which function as coherent and closed space economies” (Harvey 2000:160 quoted in Parker 2002:110). Reconstructing utopias as heterotopias allows us to achieve a greater degree of pragmatism in our view of political utopias since:

Most of the change we encounter in the concrete world is not a perfect upheaval but an incremental shift in the existing order. Utopias which, by implication, deny the authenticity of any change which preserves the existing order cannot understand most or all of the change which we actually experience (Friedman 2010:7).

So, while at face value, post-structuralism may appear to drain attention from more grounded struggles, advancing ideas such as heterotopia can indeed help us to approach how change is constructed on the ground. This is by removing from theory the easy universalisations which have too often predisposed academic vistas of freedom to consoling packages of solved antagonisms in spite of local contradictions. It would be silly to say one should be imagining space instead of participating in reducing inequality. Nonetheless the utopias we build should be about knowledge infrastructures which build up the connection between daily experience and post-capitalist ideals, and not satisfy the competitive pursuit of intellectual sages who seek to control and subdue the terrain of political immanence through certainties. A ‘knowledge democracy’ is only enabled by frames of reference like heterotopias which are sufficiently open-ended to accommodate plurality.

3.3 The post-structural anarchist’s prescriptions for action

Post-structuralism sustains that the interlocked pluralities of ordinary life should be the base from which we conceive of transformation, but this is not the birthmark of poststructuralism. The idea of revolution through everyday tactics of prefiguration is historically an anarchist practice (Day 2005: 123; Farrer 2006:137; Jun 2008: 203).

Anarchists have always been disinclined to explicating *an* answer for revolution which seems rather natural for a field of thinking that prioritizes the libertarian potential of collective life over authoritarian imperatives. The anarchist drive to dissemble concentrations of power would stand most awkwardly alongside blueprints which authorised a way to transformation. Anarchism has

thus always brought a refreshing breath of lucidity to the anti-capitalist project by highlighting the hypocrisy of the vanguards that fought for a life of choice while at the same time forcing 'the way' to get there. British anarchist Colin Ward (1982:130) said, "authority can be imposed, freedom cannot be", thereby suggesting that practical revolutionary strategy had to make more allowance for bottom-up spontaneity and situational contingency than Marxism and other structural theories did. The claim to truth stands to generate the claim to rule, and anarchists foresaw this connection early on (Schmidt and van der Walt 2009:99). For anarchists, therefore, freedom was an act of self-creation everyday and they bemoaned the fatalism of Marxism and its lack of creativity (Jun 2008:189; Kinna 2009: 236) as epitomised by classical anarchist Bakunin's famous attack on the positivism of Marx:

Revolution is a natural fact, and not the act of a few persons; we do not, therefore, intend to draw up a blueprint for the future revolutionary campaign; we leave this childish task to those who believe in the possibility and efficacy of achieving the emancipation of humanity through personal dictatorship (Bakunin 1973 cited in: Suissa 2009: 243).

Post-anarchists recognise this fact about classical anarchism, as Saul Newman (2011: 43) points out when he talks of the way in which anarchism laid the groundwork for reconstructing daily space, For example, with regard to the Spanish Civil War where coups led to anarchist-controlled areas and the reconstruction of farms, hotels and public transport along anarchist lines, or how classical theorists Elisee Reclus and Peter Kropotkin spoke of non-hierarchical urban spaces long before more contemporary thinkers like Colin Ward and Paul Goodman applied anarchism to urban planning.

But there are aspects of anarchism which have been inherited from the Enlightenment which are at odds with a focus on quotidian change. These aspects influence slight but significant differences in the interpretation of action that one may make between classical anarchism and post-anarchism. To Nathan Jun (2008), the recommendations which one is likely to draw from classical anarchism will be more authoritarian than those which post-anarchism suggests. The relative authoritarianism of classical anarchism can be illustrated by two main characteristics: the one is its modernistic reliance on moral bases for action whereas post-anarchism rejects the idea of natural universal mores. And secondly, classical anarchism spends a fair amount of energy explaining how altering macro-institutions will change society whereas post-anarchism focuses

almost exclusively on how micro-strata ultimately constitute the macro. Below I unpack the prescriptive differences between contemporary post-structural strands of anarchism and its classical Enlightenment-influenced predecessors starting with “ethics/morality” and then the “micro/macro” differences in their practical outlooks.

3.3.1 Post-anarchist practice: Ethics versus morality

“Classical anarchism is normative, post-structural anarchism is not” (Jun 2008: 139). More specifically, classical anarchism is moral, poststructuralist anarchism is ethical. Moral value is somehow “that which ought to compel everyone”, as an “imposed image of an intrinsically superior intentional life” (May 1995:82). Moral value affirms universality, hierarchy and exteriority to life. It is inevitable that every theory of social change, even post-structural theories, assume landmarks of value. The challenge is to create value without betraying the principles of anti-representationalism. This can be resolved by ascribing the spirit of ethics, instead of morality, to resistance. Ethics is not a universal caveat or normative-like morality; it is contextual and encompasses what people could and ought to have access to in a particular moment instead of measuring life against non-contextual external standards as morality does (May 1995: 88). Ethics is concerned with the multiple values that people ought to have access to in particular contexts as the impetus of action; it is not concerned with interpretation and direction of action through unifying norms. It therefore forms the value basis of post-structural anarchism’s general principles as Nathan Jun (2008: 139) makes clearer:

‘Ethical values’ are to be distinguished from ‘moral values’ on the basis of its concreteness, particularity and interiority to life itself. Rather than posing a universal code of conduct grounded in abstract concepts like ‘rationality’, ethics is instead concerned with the myriad ways in which lives can be lead.

By using “ethical value” which responds to specific practice instead of “moral value” which responds to abstract transcendent beliefs, we can describe bottom-up responsibility in a way which brings the concrete demands for justice in line with theoretical ideas of justice. Scholars such as Nina Power (2009) warn that an emphasis on ethical responsibility over morality may be foreboding of passivism, as concerns which may have been set against domination in a directed way now end up resting on structurelessness and without a universal lodestar to guide them.

While her concerns are reasonable, they seem to be based on the fear that concrete bottom-up change may not materialise without proscriptive discourse. The fear that change may not materialise, however, is not sufficient basis for enforcing parochial essentialisms on diversities to manufacture artificial unities which are not displayed on the ground first. I argue that the risk of passivism is not major when ethics is promoted over morality in theory. In fact, it creates quite the opposite, that is, situated realistic grounds for action by forwarding the principle that concrete questions based on the ground, rather than restrictive categories forwarded by theorists, create the preconditions for radical responsibility. We must attempt not to dismiss post-structuralism blindly as Power (2009) does, for it possesses elements which are compatible with attempts to rethink emancipatory values in the contemporary period, not destroy these values. It however has evoked the defensiveness of conservative thinkers who believe that proclamations of certainty, no matter how unfounded in the real world, are a necessary basis for action. To postmodernists and post-structuralists it is uncertainty rather than certainty which forms the real base of radical possibility, because to them it is in the absence of illusory moral certainties from which real responsibility emerges:

It is when we do not know *exactly* what we should do, when the effects and conditions of our actions can no longer be calculated and when we have nowhere else to turn, not even back onto our “self” that we encounter something like responsibility (Keenan 1997: 1-2; own emphasis).

The demise of the universals and absolutes has made the responsibilities of the actor more profound than before... [Post-modernity] is the moral person’s bane and chance at the same time to stand up straight and confront chaos (Bauman 1995: 6; 17).

The denunciation of a moral compulsion to act according to a certain law of human nature in the name of emancipation is underwritten by a belief that ideas of revolution which assume to encompass everybody are themselves authoritarian, and therefore viewing the ‘masses’ from a moral perspective is illusory of the pluralities which really need to be addressed. For post-anarchists what holds society back from liberatory experiences are not primarily the bars of macro-institutions and abstract ideas of their immorality but rather the limits we place on micro-social relations.

3.3.2 Post-Anarchist practice: Micro versus macro

Modernism is evident in classical anarchism's prevailing address of how macro-level institutions suppress our latent humanity and therefore need to be demolished. Unlike anarchists who emphasise the macro, post-structuralist anarchists focus on how each macro-level is produced and emerges from the micro, and that if you change relations 'below' you simultaneously change the macro (Anarquista 2007: 12). For post-anarchists the micro, not the macro, is the primary justification for action. To them various oppressions and inequalities cannot be summed up by one basic problematic seen from above but must be perceived on the ground "not as circle but instead an intersecting network of lines" (May 1994:10-11).

Concentrating on dismantling the macro has made classical anarchism more abstract and according to Woodcock (1992:4-5) also more violent in its ideas of action.. To contemporary anarchist Uri Gordon (2005:4), old anarchists carried a view of change so macro and "circular" in scope that it "was one step away from gross millenarianism" and he quotes Bakunin's reference to "a universal, worldwide revolution" to prove this: "[The] formidable reactionary coalition can be destroyed only by the greater power of the simultaneous revolutionary alliance and action of all the people of the civilized world" (Bakunin 1866: 3).

When it comes to imagining how we may go forward, classical anarchism and post-structuralist anarchism do indeed offer us different directions because of the macro-micro and ethics-morality distinctions. However, I exaggerate the differences between the two in order to point out the changing contours of anarchism in theory from a particular discursive style which privileged grandiosity to one which almost exclusively focuses on the contingencies of localised space. Classical anarchism is far more dynamic and modest than I make it out to be, but this should be obvious. How else could a strand like post-structuralism claim affinity with anarchism if the latter did not possess antecedent elements of a contemporary critique? Suissa (2009: 246) asks us to think of traditional anarchism in terms of its lively tensions and not as a cobwebbed uniform of thought. To her, anarchism of the past was infused by the tensions of strategically proposing ultimate goals but tactically focusing on that which was situational. I do not dispute that classical and contemporary anarchism share the same values and principles or that classical anarchism was multi-dimensional – but the programme for change is affected greatly when ultimate aims are removed from anarchist theory in such a way as to make post-structuralist anarchism as a

whole less at odds with the type of revolutionary change suggested by contemporary prefigurative practices.

As discussed previously, post-anarchism is about radicalising the ethics of action in particularized discoveries of value and not about grand gestures aimed at toppling institutions. In the end it better suits and encompasses the inward-looking processes behind prefiguration than modernist strands of anarchism do. Old anarchism suggests revolution as a difference in kind (destruction of the centre of power, unleashing a new society built on true human nature) whereas contemporary post-structuralist anarchism suggests revolution as a change of degree (radical incremental changes in social relations over time) (Anarquista 2007:19). Therefore if prefiguration is highlighted as the key anarchist feature of radical politics today, then post-anarchism is a better framework for contemporary anarchism.

3.3.3 Different roles for theory

The two different approaches to prescription suggest different roles for theory in emancipation. Post-structuralism removes the canvas of universality from the hand of the theorist who wishes to paint pictures of social possibilities. Post-structuralists attempt to mirror a world which they recognise as too colourful for catch-all phrases, too unpredictable for fixity. For them, the work of the theorist is to devise the analytical tools with which to mirror the world – the theorist merely provides kits for action which are sometimes useful, sometimes not. She must reveal and conceptualise the antagonisms and the questions rooted in micro-politics to aid the iconography of radical change. By imposing imaginary end-points she cannot satisfy revolution, only falsify what is actually on the ground. The smooth pictures of old will no longer suffice in our explanations of the world. When we dispense of images of completeness and purity in our theories, then space and time in revolutionary discourse may begin to presuppose more realistic features; for example, uncertainty where once there was exactitude, temporariness where once there was completion, experimentality where once there was authoritarian truth, and situated ethics where once there was non-contextual mores. We still need to categorise and conceptualise in order to organise society; that I do not discount. What I ask is that we entertain the idea of presenting these categories in the spirit of post-structuralism – to generate discourse that reinforces that which is possible for transformation from within the context of acknowledging that which is not.

General theories must show that knowing *exactly* what awaits revolutionary organisation and the possibility of *totalising* social change is impossible. Being able to meet the demands for rational scientific justification of any struggle may appeal to vanguards and polemicists, but it does not change that uprisings occur spontaneously through actions which can effect great change without ever reaching points of consistency. Cornelius Castoriadis (1984: 329) explains that in spite of the central role of theory to leverage particular notions, we must remember that the meanings of political constructs such as equality and justice are constituted primarily through action, and are not concepts which belong to specific theory. They are ideas continuously (re)constituted by social institutions such as *Abahalali* and the Zapatistas which interact with and detract from the state and economic powers as they prefigure alternatives, thereby creating new boundaries for what equality and justice “might be and would be”. The academic’s urge for strict normativity gives too much credit to their own capacity for prediction and too little credit to the bottom-up social imaginary which cannot be contained. For if anything, it is the ineffable bottom-up ‘drive’ for a world which better suits its own satisfaction which explains the true capacity behind continuous radical anti-systemic movement, as David Couzen Hoy (2005:11) says:

Resistance should not be blind, but agents need not know explicitly all their reasons and principles in advance. Resistance itself may be required to make explicit through the resulting situation what the motives and grounds for that act of refusal are. On this account, the engaged agents will find out what is possible by seeing what their resistance opens up. This sequence will undoubtedly appear backward to the more rationalistically inclined social theorists who believe in the primacy of universal principles. These theorists want the agent to articulate the principles that would legitimate the envisioned social change before actually taking social or political action.

3.4 Devolving heterotopia: Spatio-temporal pillars for new discourse

For more than a century social change in societies has been imagined mainly along two rather narrow paths – reform or revolution (Alperovitz 2011). This received wisdom limited the perceived space of transformation to either the inside of institutions through readjustments to policy (reform) or through a utopian insurrection (capital R revolution) which moves society dramatically outside of itself. A Reform-or-Revolution bifurcation meant that one supported either the idea that change began from the top down or one rallied for the dramatic removal of

existing top-down structures. The mainstream left, at least theoretically, has tended strongly towards the latter. This mentality also meant that on both the left and right transformation was the task of the elite – either the technocrats who implement policy or the revolutionaries who resolve the standard for emancipation on behalf of the masses.

In recent years the war between conservative reforms or cataclysmic breaks has been put in abeyance by an addition to the spectrum of possibility. The spontaneous productions of autonomous experimentations (Chapter One) mark a third possibility. Instead of Reform-versus-Revolution, acts of communal prefiguration introduce a third possibility where change occurs simultaneously inside-*and*-outside the system. New forms of community are exercised alongside existing structures, but infuse those spaces of ordinary life with a rebellious, radical, dreamlike glimpse into the possibilities for self-liberation in relation to immediate social and material contexts – in other words a heterotopia of change. This third heterotopic possibility operates neither by formal policy nor revolutionary creed, but horizontally, contingently and open-endedly.

Interstitial movements form part of this political imaginary. In setting up “momentary communities” (Stavrídes 2007:2-3), the Zapatistas, *Abahlali*, the Movement of Movements and global Occupy situations establish processes of “evolutionary reconstruction” of society (Alperovitz 2011:3). In discussing the rising third possibility of transformation, Graeber (2007b: 63-64) admits that the unsettling simultaneity of working inside-*and*-outside the system may be disheartening because it requires us to accept that “spontaneous creations always seem to end up being subsumed within some form of bureaucracy”. He quickly adds though that such “action is genuinely revolutionary [nonetheless] when the process of production of situations is experienced as being just as liberating as the situations themselves”. His optimism is fortified by Saul Newman (in the opening quote to the chapter) who explains that when radically different communities are prefigured, then the limits of the present are revealed. The acts of transgression which Newman speaks about may not ever completely vanquish hegemony but they do produce thresholds to reality and through this inject the present with a structural renewal, filling the cracks of hegemony with buds for new socio-political behaviour, particularly potent because this is devised from the micro-sphere upwards. Processes of revolutionary resistance which exist not to satisfy pre-destiny but to experiment with micro socio-political relations are growing in

echoes around the world. These tactics are seen by Wallerstein (2011) as descendents of the experimental legacy of the communism of May 1968 and its emphases on socialism as approximated in the pedestrian present by ordinary citizens.

By isolating this third way of socialist transformation, which was hailed by the workers and students of 1968 (a type of transformation all at once prefigurative, anarchistic, heterotopian and post-structural), I hope to bring to the fore the importance of non-authoritarian utopias in theories of change. In order to complete Chapter Three's discussion on how we may reconsider revolution's representation I am going to suggest three distinct plinths on which we may begin to sustain spatio-temporal images for new political imaginaries, particularly as a response to those who criticise the indefiniteness of post-structuralism for leaving the crises of representation unsolved. In the following discussion, I devolve my interpretation of heterotopias into three key conceptual areas to show that there are indeed positive alternatives, and that we can assertively put the idea of heterotopia to work. To recall a point made earlier, any theory of social change, even post-structural theories, will assume landmarks of value; the issue is to avoid universalising prescriptions. Therefore I suggest that our toolbox of theory to describe movements for the contexts of non-totalising social change consist of the following major considerations around paradoxical space:

- The chasms of the present (3.4.1);
- Negotiating autonomy from the state (3.4.2); and
- Understanding the (physical) impermanence of social radicalisations (3.4.3).

In the ongoing process of discussing whether a new collective reality is possible, we may now only be at "stage one: we are only playing with the tools at this point, trying to think about what the model of such a building would look like" (Nesbit *et al.* 2003:191). In using heterotopia, which is described by Saul Newman (2011:344) as a "distinctly postanarchist conception of political space", we play around with re-situating the idea of "revolution as a spatial fantasy" outside of modernism.

3.4.1 In the chasms

For post-modernists, episodes of structural transformation do not begin via existing dominant institutions but in their gaps or “in the chasms” of dominant institutions. Therefore transformation emerges from disharmonious social space from which the forces are generated (for example direct action, autonomy and direct democracy) which eventually cause ruptures in the existing social sphere. Existing structures do not take primacy in commanding social change, as they only take primacy in managing the status quo. As a result, post-modern social theorists believe that modernism does a disservice to the project for understanding when it concentrates on the proselytisation of end-points. Postanarchists categorically believe that the notion of revolution must be reclaimed from that old image of institutional ascendancy and placed in the disharmonious margins of the present-tense:

We have to question the broader notion of revolution as an all-encompassing event that emancipates us from all social, political and economic oppression and ideological obfuscations, and which transforms the entirety of social relations; we have seen how this presupposes a utopian fantasy of wholeness and harmony (Newman 2011: 353).

The image of revolution can be reinvented, according to postanarchists, by the “anarch-isation of discourse” (Newman 2011:352) when we come to grips with the structural impossibilities of taking power at a single point, and of closing identities, symbols and structures. The socialist fantasy path is a malady of modernity, producing the belief that our main justification for individual and collective action should be that we have witnessed and can proclaim a rationale which guarantees a future which will specifically be better than the present. By realising that faith in this end-point requirement simply exposes radical politics to an *a priori* of needing savants, we can begin to rouse from the slumber of epistemological hierarchy. This is gradually being realised as the rise of contemporary anarchistic styles of politics reinvigorates within theory a focus on what people can do by-and-for themselves in the here-and-now and how theorists can capture this instead of aspiring to yet another grand narrative. The space of revolutionary fantasy has become the present: “Once you begin to look at human society from an anarchist point of view you discover that the alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structures” (Ward 2004: 20).

Let me then examine what I believe the “chasms of society” to be. By change “in the chasms” I mean the differences made to social life which stem from action taken in the gaps of social structures through small activities carried out by groups and individuals changing social relations in everyday life. We identified heterotopian processes of liberation as occurring at intersections with existing modes of power. The site of heterotopian change would be the chasms of dominant practices.

Thus the first key principle for revolution which I propose is that the most important actions are not the direct attacks on institutions but what happens alongside those attacks. This is particularly significant as a principle if we recall the discussion in Chapter Two on post-anarchism and power which made clear that revolution today must face that power as a relation is infinite and power as an institution is proliferated; therefore it is impossible to eliminate power as a whole and impractical to attempt to eliminate it instantly in institutional form. As a result, once we remove the primacy of eliminating power as the task of revolution then the most important revolutionary activities are preparations for new social relations which promote egalitarian values and which take place in the chasms where people are slowly re-socialised through democratic, consensus-based and egalitarian lived experiments. Organising of people to set up free schools in an inner city, squatting outside of the New York stock exchange for weeks while physically sharing resources with fellow citizens, and attempting non-hierarchical economic systems through community markets – all of these are seemingly un-dramatic but they constitute the hard work done on the fringes of domination which widen our capacity for freedom as it intersects with experiences of the here-and-now. While we may not experience the explosive and grandiose annihilation of institutional power through these actions, people do achieve the incremental hollowing of hegemonic powers by opening areas of freedom and defending them. In the chasms we can develop new ways of being which are radically different to what is expected by the norms of society; this invokes a revolutionisation of social relations resembling not an instant – but events leading up to that revolutionary change – and proceeding from the realities of the present day (Shantz 2010). In the words of Buber, these acts of a new world are preparatory and necessary for sustainable revolution because “we must create here-and-now the space *now* possible for the thing for which we are striving, so that it may come to fulfilment then” (Buber 1958:13).

The challenge of capturing the potential of the present in a general way bears testament to a critical challenge of our time. It is very difficult in our time to conceive politically of the potential for change manifest in the present-tense. The intricate interconnection of global and local controls which cross our daily lives through technology, law, media and consumerism have the effect of sharpening our sense of particularity but making more dense and abstract the domain in which that particularity exists. Therefore understanding how we conceive politically and spatially of the present and where it is constituted in the gaps between the micro and the macro strata of society, between local and global forces, between concrete realities and overarching social space is a difficult question of our time.

To Saul Newman (2005a: 135) globalisation in particular has changed the face of our perceptions for change manifest in the present, because it is now evident that domination is virtually everywhere; we are living in “a world without a centre and periphery, but rather with many centres, inviting new antagonisms. The more we are brought together – through the global economy, the worldwide web and so on – the more atomized we become”. The fragmentations of globalisation and its diffuse webs of power may seem insurmountable at the din of these declarations but, in particular conditions, they are not. Bratich (2007:169) interprets the post-anarchist point of view as an argument that the best way to respond to global hegemony today is by taking advantage of the social controls most proximal to us, to re-appropriate power by playing with structures of control in the chasms of domination available here-and-now. He argues that:

The increasingly complex forms of control (through decentralisation) also create zones of vulnerability to be exploited. These gaps proliferate and can be appropriated into sites for minoritarian experiments. The political task is to make spaces more minoritarian and proliferate more minoritarian spaces.

Heterotopia is an important umbrella concept for the third possibility of change exactly because it privileges the creation of anomalies in the gaps and not perfection which over-codes relations as the motivation for change. We have witnessed dislocations and openings in social relations which have in the past proved to be transformative, even emancipatory. Everyday minoritarian experimentations with ‘otherness’ continues to play a big part in delegitimizing global state-capitalism, for instance, the anti-globalisation movements, anti-statist municipalities and other

acts of direct democracy, worker and consumer co-operatives, communes, community-based social economy services and civic environmental councils.

Minoritarian movements are indeed connected with one another. A general connection in this instance means something different to what universality means with millenarian projects of socialism where struggle is built around the unity of a 'cause'. According to post-structuralism, all movements should remain constitutively open and therefore various struggles are not expected to valorize their meanings around a single common ground, such as making economics the point of convergence so that feminism and racism are best defined in terms of labour or so that environmentalism is best seen as an issue of production. For postanarchists, the prefiguration of justice, equality and democracy can in practice be achieved in terms of the present of whatever situation specific movements find themselves. And therefore references made to communities articulating agency differently according to their specific identities and contexts disables the exclusion of unexpected forms of activism from the definition of radicalism and ensures that socialism remains an evolving and open movement.

However postanarchists do not renege on the necessity of articulating a binding force since they recognise that all politics requires a generalising element to be truly political (Newman 2005b:139-143). The general landscape is articulated as the shared struggle against structures of domination and inequality. The universal element this time resists the hegemonic impetus of a common ground; instead, it is a political universality which is culturally situated from the bottom-up. Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) explains the affinity between different here-and-now radicalisations when she says that "twenty-one years ago we struggled with the recognition of difference within the context of commonality. Today we grapple with the recognition of commonality within the context of difference".

3.4.2 Outside of the State

Movements which enact non-reform, non-Revolution transformations largely tend to create upheavals to the status quo through their autonomy. Autonomy here means communities that constitute themselves, collectively make their own rules or principles of operation, and continually re-examine these rules-principles. In action this is resistance which seeks not primarily to attack head-on or seek intermediation from dominant structures, for these strategies

would invariably require that the direction of change be decided by a group other than the people themselves. For post-anarchists, the breaking of state-capitalist societies does not come by quick revolution or slow vertical reform decided upon by cadres, as the real fruits of victory are the slow interstitial processes underlying self-driven change, that is, the never ending attempts at real non-vanguardist egalitarianism which approximates socialism within communities which exist beyond the immediate control of instituted structures, where for a while ordinary people assume the processes and behaviours of a society already free. In order to prefigure direct democracy, for example, building structures of open, communicative and joint decision-making is prioritised; while focusing on winning influence within party channels for example cannot be a primary aim, because strategically the state must be 'bypassed'. I recognise that autonomy and anti-statism are not brand new ideas but are in fact implicit beliefs of the anarchist philosophies which for centuries have called upon people to "organise their powers apart from and against the state" (Bakunin 1953: 377; cited in Newman 2011: 253). But as Graeber (2004: 45) argues, these ideas of anti-statism are integral today for understanding contemporary constructions of revolution, since we are again becoming aware that:

Action does not necessarily have to aim to topple governments. Attempts to create autonomous communities in the face of power, would, for instance, be almost by definition revolutionary acts. And history shows us that the continual accumulation of such acts can change (almost) everything.

According to Richard Day (2004: 717), the bad habit of old theories to express meaningful social change mainly in terms of universalising forms is "epitomised by the nation-state, but including conceptions of the world-state as well". We are so tied up with conceiving of all things political in mass and essential terms that we have convinced ourselves that only states and mass parties can deal with social problems (Ward 1982:21). However, it is in the chasms of overwhelming state power where many of the most noteworthy autonomous movements of our time have made their mark like the Zapatistas and *Abahlali baseMjondolo*. Hence the second key concept for new revolutionary discourse which I propose is the scrutiny of what it means to be autonomous of state power today in terms of affecting social change.

Outside of exceptional movements like the Zapatistas, the massive grasp of statist relations over daily life has tainted how most of us imagine the practical effectiveness of non-mass-based

radical change..The media has made the sheer scope of the state's hegemonic power quite apparent recently with events like the global economic recessions that began when the US government's (de)regulation policy sacrificed the security of millions of working class Americans for the profiting of financial elites. This drove home how the domestic state's reach into the lives of ordinary people is as rooted, robust and expansive as ever. Unfortunately in the neoliberal era the state's pledge to action is overwhelmingly done in the name of capital, a reality not reserved for the US or out of line with the general role of the capitalist state in society. We are realising that, in spite of romantic misconceptions of the state as benefactor and patron of people, consistently the state acts instead as a populist moral buffer against opposition to private enterprise (Landauer 1978/1911:81). This is central to the role that states have always had as functional elements within the capitalist-world-system (Wallerstein 1998:11). Moderate interventions in inequality through welfare social policy mitigate, hide or disguise the worse excesses of capitalism and de-radicalise the discontented (Panitch and Konings 2009: 79-80).

There is a widespread and growing loss of belief in the ability of state structures to actually transform society. The acquisition of state power as a legitimate stage in the radical equalisation of society is in fast decline. But the growing disillusionment does not make finding an "exit" path any more obvious, especially as discontent in the state system today coincides with the crystallisation of a globalised capitalist inter-state system. According to Immanuel Wallerstein (1998: 9) we have since the latter half of the 19th century seen geographically global capitalism extend its tentacles, with worldwide integration almost complete by the latter half of the 20th century. The internationalisation of the economy is [not natural] but politically determined. You cannot fault those who see little hope for micro-utopias in this dense field of state power. How do we evoke emancipation in the chasms of this kind of power?

Garnering the courage and hopefulness to act against the state today is one which takes a great faith in utopian change as we find ourselves in "the first genuinely planetary bureaucratic system in all history" (Graeber 2009: xi). This is so important in the context of open-ended activity because it evinces the main challenge for open post-structural forms of radicalism, namely, the fact (or problem) that we are faced by both relations of power which are in-eliminable and structures of power which are seemingly immovable. How would micro-utopias of autonomous

communities affect these forces of repression? We are faced with a big challenge in determining what is technically achievable through acts of anti-systemic autonomy.

For Foucault (1982:221 cited in Hetherington 1997: 52), autonomy as interpreted through a post-structural lens can never be pure, for freedom and control are always intertwined: “Freedom is a condition for the exercise of power”. The intermeshing of freedom and control makes the aspiration of autonomy complicated in quite apparent ways. In part, this is because of the state’s connivance: its ability to allow or disallow radical acts as it pleases (to some degree). Marcuse recognised in his thesis, *One-Dimensional Man (1964)*, on ‘repressive desublimation’ that power creates certain cultural industries in which people can ostensibly enact desire for ‘more’. They believe themselves to be experiencing something divine without realising the radical edge has been removed by the permission granted by authority; for example, sex converted into the pornography industry, or the counter-culture of the sixties converted into a marketable “hippie” fad. People are provided with a false sense of fulfilment by believing themselves to be acting outside of the status quo, all the while acting in the domain allowed them by the state so that social control deepens with cunning inconspicuousness.

Socialism can be used in the very same way by authorities who legitimise dominant systems through ‘participatory’ and ‘democratic’ methods, for instance government-union alliances, ‘collective’ workplace councils and entities like the Western-led foreign aid industry and paternalistic NGOs which all purport to further equality and democracy through glaringly elitist structures. Therefore, when and where freedom and control intertwine, authority can mimic radicalism. But there is also a serious problem with acts of emancipation replicating authority. These situations illustrate how domination accommodates freedom in reality and vice versa, making the project for autonomy a complex one.

A critical question is raised. If autonomy in action refers to counter-communities acting in the gaps, particularly spaces where state power is less decisive, does this not simply leave more powerful strongholds of state power in-tact? Some day it may be (or may not) be proved that interstitial activity is indeed incapable of interfering with power’s social bases. But as we stand today there is no evidential basis for the fiction of a universal answer and furthermore no evidence that suggests if there was a universal method that it would more effectively erode authoritarianism than interstitial change can. Wright (2010:327) believes “interstitial

transformation may play a positive role in the long-term trajectory of emancipatory social transformation” because “in the present historical condition no strategy credibly poses a threat to the system in the near future... [T]he problem is to imagine things we can do now which have a chance of opening up possibilities under contingent conditions in the future”. By accepting post-structuralism in radical politics we accept the impossibility of eliminating power as a whole and therefore we can no longer state our social problems in terms of mass politics and, consequently, universal solutions are no longer the solutions of which we seek pedestalled claims. We must find autonomy’s place *within* state power.

However, putting together frameworks in future to support post-structural politics will not be easy. It is hard to delineate in a sure voice a picture of what awaits “(the) revolution” when we want to break from domination but accept that power is in-eliminable and global in stature – indeed, what hope is left for us? It is difficult to inspire people to the self-sacrifice needed to shake social slavery and expose opportunities for change if we at the same time are telling them that hegemony is recreating itself as they mobilise and will never be totally overcome. How do we in future construct the idea of open-ended autonomy as one that stands a chance of transferring life’s better potentials into the present through rebellion that defies the totalising might of power. The idea of bypassing the state cuts through critical questions about ‘to what extent’ and ‘to what effect’ autonomous movements can walk on both legs, in the dense terrain of state authority and in the playful emergences of carving out something freer. Emergent theories will hopefully not assume that the aim is a complete win, but will ask how autonomy can contribute to living utopias by exposing from within the thresholds of state power the heterotopian passages which relieve us of despondency.

In our complex societies where political, social, technological and economic governance is increasingly interpenetrated by dense networks of global and local hierarchies, it is increasingly difficult to imagine the impetus for change emerging from above. In order to decipher real bottom-up alternatives to the system we cannot neglect to develop the terms of autonomy. While it remains important that we reflect about the inter-relation between freedom and control, it is more important that we discuss how, in spite of the relationship, there still exists gaps for autonomy from power. There are moments when freedom can exploit power, producing unexpected and uncontrollable forms which denaturalise the omnipotence of politicians, policy,

the state and their military armature. This is the beauty of movement, as we can self-consciously construct innumerable counter-forces which weaken the perpetual push of hegemony so that we inflict rupture and injury on domination as it relentlessly goes about trying to transform life. These counter-forces are delivered as-we-go-along, tapping into our endless human capacity for imagining what 'better' should be. The beauty of autonomous movement is that it is uncertain, it is between structures, and it entails sproutings of new truths not affirmations of old ones.

One can only be hopeless when it has been decided with some certainty that the full course of possibilities which exists is known, and that one cannot within this full set find his own desire. Hopelessness is an attitude contrapuntal to a modern sense of certainty. And a sense of 'scientific' certainty about history, of knowing objectively the destinies at our disposal is a perception which insists on hopelessness. Acknowledging the profoundly unknowable nature of social relations can set us free from dogmatic movements. If the world is not closed, and essence not fixed, and aim in-absolute, then we can yet achieve, have a hand at constructing, and at least try and see what may be achieved in the name of our fulfilment. There is space for hope with applications of autonomy. Autonomy in action is not an end-point of full self-government; it is the intention for self-government, a brave process amidst impossibilities. We cannot be defeated by the non-occurrence of autonomy's end-point if it is not an end-point for which we are searching. But we can take victory when we make attempts at autonomy which give rise to partial moments that are truly self-driven and where we revolt by using our capacities for decision-making to act; these are moments where we are free because we are deciding for ourselves, present and un-crippled by the management of who we are. Post-anarchist Saul Newman (2011: 355) explains the ambiguity and challenge of autonomy:

We cannot understand autonomy as a fully achieved identity... We could say that this dimension, paradoxically, is what makes autonomy both possible and impossible: insofar as it is external to the symbolic order, it provides a certain distance, a critical point of departure, or even a space of resistance; at the same time, it is what prevents an autonomous space from being completely realised.

Bonefeld (1994 cited in: Böhm 2008:18) that autonomy, understood in this way, is vital to our pursuit of a better society for the very reason that it lacks the 'happy ending' of absolute autonomy. The restless lack of 'wholeness' is what drives autonomy's value, because with each

new concrete attempt to act or think outside of that which controls us we gain a little more understanding of the internal contradictions which lock humanity in the battle for transcendence:

Within the impossibilities of autonomy there are possibilities of autonomous practices that challenge the very hegemony they are part of. Autonomy constitutes both a possible and impossible aspiration, as autonomous spaces embody and disclose the contradictory dynamics between integration and transcendence (Bonefeld 1994: 5).

These wisdoms which recognise the contradictions of autonomy allow movements to be autonomous, without being snubbed when they utilise vertical channels in moments of necessity. Existing autonomous movements better than anything else show us first-hand that bypassing the state in an absolute sense is impossible, but that use of the state need not constitute a strategic “stage”, as one only need engage the state as much as is necessary to meet the needs of a community’s intended autonomy (Day 2005). Paradoxically, and often unfortunately, exemplars of autonomy have to work through bureaucratic channels to preserve themselves. For example, the deep processes of self-government which shape the autonomous political atmosphere of *Abahlali base Mjondolo* have not been put in disrepute or disabled *tout court* by their engagement (and victory) within the Constitutional Court in 2009 (Tolsoi 2009). Gibson (2011:170) continues to define *Abahlali* as an example of “positive autonomy” not only for the threat it poses to the state through the boycotting of elections but mostly because of its continued construction of community-based governance. Even the Zapatistas and The Landless Movement of Brazil (MST), easily the most cited autonomous movements of the early twenty-first century, have themselves engaged with bureaucracies (through voting) not in debasement of their core principle of autonomy but out of the pragmatic and inevitable need to engage with parliamentary power at moments in their struggle. This does not nullify autonomism; they remain autonomous because their engagement is consciously minimal, engaging only as much as is necessary to serve the survival of their own unique modes of democracy.

3.4.3 Impermanence

The revolutionary theories which became dominant in the scientific modern era created a pool of images – of agency and human nature, of strategy and enemy (of what we were fighting ‘here’), and what ‘there’ in the future would mean. This is a pool of images we turn to almost

automatically when confronted with desires to escape the social world. In this way we are all in some sense automatic students of modernity, unable to escape (whether we fight it or embrace it) the images of dark regimented angry people bringing peace with flames. The images of revolution derived from old theory which cloak the meaning of the word, not only overwhelms our sense of 'strategy' but the derivative 'strategy' in itself has become somewhat of an automatic image of what we think we want of revolution. When "they" bring the flames of change, is it not permanent change we expect? When we think of freedom, do we not stare across the horizon and explain to ourselves the world after the process, permanently different?

But when we start to think of revolution as contingent not on a 'they' but on an 'us', not on the horizon but in the present, not by dramatic flames but by slow autonomous reconstitutions, then we think of temporality in terms of revolution very differently. Therefore when developing a new purview on revolution we must concentrate on the question of 'effect'. In post-structuralism, we do not want to set free an imminent human essence once-and-for-all, as we do not think that such an essence exists. We are wanting to, as Colin Ward once aptly said (1982: 131), make the choice between libertarian and authoritarian solutions in different everyday scenarios, "a running engagement, most which never conclude and which have occurred throughout history". Because the subjects of emancipation are unfixed and open to different discursive and political interpretations, they are always being reconstructed by changing power and knowledge relations and therefore emancipation is practical, particular and temporary in structure, not metaphysical.

Therefore the third (and final) principle which I propose as integral to new discourse is about building conceptions of what the short and long-term effects of non-hegemonic acts of prefiguration are. The final principle is about how, once we embrace interstitial change, we must look at accepting the idea of revolutionary change that is impermanent, not once-and-for-all. If we accept that complete and final emancipation is an illusion, then we must in future theories of revolutionary societal change take more seriously how action to alter the world is inspired in an environment that accepts the inevitability of impermanent change. John Holloway (2010) offers forethought in support of this when he says:

Traditional theory sees each moment in terms of its utility for constructing a future. Acts of rebellion are judged in terms of whether contribute to the construction of a lasting

revolution. But if we break duration and each moment is distinct, then there is no need for acts of rebellion to stand before the tribunal of instrumental time. Each moment of rebellion stands proud in its own dignity (Holloway 2010:236).

From those who believe we need to let go of our mental addictions to knowing the future, words like “transience” and “sporadic” have entered the lexicon of transformation. One such commentator (a forebear of ontological anarchism), Hakim Bey (1991), developed the idea of the Temporary Autonomous Zone. He believes that because “liberation is realized struggle” hence moments, instances and short-lived events of prefiguration which create material alternatives can change social structures deeply and therefore we do not have to measure an insurrectionary activities’ worth by the duration of its physical existence. Bey (1991:38) clarifies:

The Temporary Autonomous Zone is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the state, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves to reform elsewhere/elsewhen before the state can crush it... [T]he TAZ can occupy these areas clandestinely and carry on its festal purposes for quite a while in relative peace. Perhaps certain small TAZ’s have lasted whole lifetimes because they went unnoticed.

So back to our discussion on imagining heterotopias instead of utopias: when we think of transformation in terms of the relationships and structures contingent on the present, then we must let go of trying to find neat linear progressions which reach an end. It is time to give space more life as until now “space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the immobile. Time on the contrary, was richness, life, dialectic” (Foucault 1986: cited in Topinka 2010:55). When we look upon the imperfect living utopias of small groups of people trying to be egalitarian, caring and anti-authoritarian in the tough strictures of present, and when we see how these ‘minor’ activities create moments of actually-existing non-statist societies (such as the self-settlement of people on government land, the survival of occupy protesters through the winter, anti-globalisation festivals ten years ago and the dogged resilience of shack dwellers against the bribery of political parties during election time), then we cannot say that time is more important than space today in the construction of emancipatory acts. These temporary breaks with the state-capitalist system have affected the world of power and freedom greatly and have indeed created far-reaching waves in our qualitative understanding of liberation. Today the reconstructions of space (more

than time/duration) determine the effects of insurrections: the ideal of heterotopia anticipates hegemony and thus the impermanence of liberation, and in this light we no longer see and seek a point of permanent change as the token of revolution. This is hopeful. In a context where revolutionary activity is no longer aimed at the totalising and permanent re-ordering of society, we must conceive of the challenge differently, as one aimed at “minimising domination and exploitation” (Day 2005:134). No revolutionisation can be permanent in any case, as not only the state but every revolution eats its own children; internal contradictions arise, authoritarian forces take over from outside or within, or conditions change and the phoenix which arose dies down. All radical reforms have a life-span. This is the nature of trying to create new value in a complex society. The process of creating value therefore requires an eternal revolution against the forces of repression wherever and however they arise. This process lacks a telos or end goal, since there is always a micro-fascism lurking at the heart of every system of value construction which can, and often does, re-territorialize that system.. The fact that the discovery of value is always provisional, tentative, and contingent is hardly a reason not to pursue it. It is precisely our inability to secure an ultimate means which necessitates the perpetual pursuit of ‘anarchy’ (Jun 2008:140)

When initiatives are squashed, co-opted or fade out, we try again and again. This is not a sign of defeat as eschatological theories will have us believe. It is very realistic to perceive that bottom-up revolution cannot be permanent in the same way that advocates of statism and capitalism know that their mechanisms of coercion lose effect and are temporary and always need to be adjusted to the forces of dissent. Posing a new order as a direct alternative within the current order alongside current institutions in an open-ended environment would mean that the re-emergence of domination could not be controlled at all. At first glance it is intriguing and maybe off-putting for some why intellectuals and activists would embark on a course where their own methods seemed to defeat them. A closer look will tell us that advocates of open-ended methods of experimental change do not believe in the emergence of a permanent state of change and therefore do the best they can by wholly involving themselves in the constant and present process of improvement against hegemony as opposed to resigning to the parallel process, which is the constant renewal of hegemony. If people start to believe that the temporary constructions are about more than fleeting-experiences but are the most open avenues we have for experiencing the freedom of self-direction, and that the values born in these experimental

communities are resilient and lasting, then more people may become involved in such initiatives. The more people who see that their daily lives are not a subsidiary to grand revolution but truly the only utopia, the more these actions may expand in force and effect and the more we all experience transcendence. As the Thomas Theorem in sociology so aptly captures: “If men believe a situation to be true, then it is true in its consequences”.

3.5 Conclusion

Today anarchistic ideas are gaining distinctiveness in radical rhetoric in way that is unprecedented. What the moribund left for so many decades have eagerly awaited, that is, a new take on the questions “what is to be done?” and “what are the alternatives?” has in the early twenty-first century come with the sharp renewal of anarchism – albeit, this time, with a different type of contribution to traditional anarchism, that is, the explicit awareness by the post-structuralist anarchists of the impossibility of totalising change, which is one further step in the project for anti-authoritarian socialism. Post-anarchism has not constructed elements which have not previously existed in some or other way in anarchist writings. Its value lies in its directing of anarchism’s anti-hierarchicalism to target outright the epistemologies of radical thought itself and specifically its conclusions on the nature of revolution. It allows us to reconsider two things clearly, that the urge to freedom will never entirely eliminate the urge to domination and that the urge to freedom will always be plural; and, that given these elucidations, we must consider any single fixed system of truth offered in the name of complete liberation as an imposturous reaffirmation of authority. Naturally there are problems with the radical subjectivism which I propose which I have not the space to cover here. My argument is, however, that in both movement and theory, old moral universal discourses have flagged. While I cannot propose a concrete substitution thereof, I am convinced that a new dawning of dominant principles for revolutionary discourse is being cast in the damascene moments of anti-foundational experimentation such as heterotopian descriptions of social change. I believe that one of the most powerful assertions of this experiment is post-anarchism.

The *raison de etre* of post-anarchism as with all emancipatory currents is the uncovering of paths to what a freer human life could possibly mean. It, therefore, would be a facile misrepresentation to simply associate the unfixed approach of post-anarchism and its rejection of close-ended theorisation with a refusal and unwillingness to prompt positive courses for organisation.

Antagonised by the docility of oppressed life, I think any revolutionary spirit is driven by a self-referential vision of a radically improved society and a vision that seeks to be shared. But whereas rationalists (the old left) have rested on and monumentalised singular visions of a renewed society, the new radicals approach the uncovering of answers as an unending process where important partial solutions to hierarchical society come to fruition in the experimental democratic modes of communities which aspire to non-domination in their way according to their values as determined by their particular contexts. The answers are never permanent and never complete. Unlike its predecessors, contemporary anarchism does not apply proscribed answers; instead it is always rearticulating the question of liberation and reconstituting answers to the present. Contemporary anarchism is characterised by positive ethico-political principles – present-ism, bypassing statist channels and temporariness – which gesture in a general direction what form the “answer” may take for our generation (in the spirit of what is being enacted in radical autonomous spaces). It is a current which regales the luminescent turns of process as the lodestone of its direction, avoiding the brand of fixed destination.

CONCLUSION:

PRESERVING A RADICAL SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

“A goal which is infinitely remote is not a goal at all, it is a deception. A goal must be closer. Each epoch, each generation, each life has had, and has, its own experience, and the end of each generation must be itself” - Alexander Herzen (1956 cited in Ward 2004:32)

Post-anarchism may allow us to conceptualise open-ended aspects of anti-systemic organisation as more than mere parentheses to categories of revolution. It insists that the intrepidity and creativity of open-ended experimental micro-utopias is in fact the driving force in real constitutions of insurrection. Chapter One of this thesis is dedicated to looking at contemporary anarchism as a primary context for critiquing closed-ended associations with revolution's meaning. This lends itself readily to Chapter Two, which is a search for theoretical justifications which support the debunking of the old as initiated in Chapter One. Post-anarchism emerges from Chapter Two as a leading area for academic investigation into the rejection of convenient answers for the parameters of revolution. Post-anarchism privileges attitudes to social reorganisation which discard the centricities of the correct 'way' which tends to require stipulations for essential subjectivity, vanguard organisation or universal progression. In Chapter Three, the post-structural concept of heterotopia is sketched as an angle for initial reconstructions of anti-systemic utopias. This final chapter is a presage of key principles for non-positivistic theories through a brief look at the following: what it means to be free of power, what radicalising society in the gaps of state power may mean and how we can mitigate totalitarian revolutionary images by appreciating more the realities of impermanence.

Post-structuralist anarchism addresses itself to an age where socialism defined by models handed down to obedient populations is undergoing a critical if not penultimate rejection. The presence of post-structuralism has stigmatised the categories, functions and psychic attachments of top-down elements in socialism so much so that scientific socialism may forever be sidelined, putting us in a place, to borrow Whitman's words, where society "is for a while between things ended and things begun". However dependence on the eschatologies, the dreams of a final end to domination, which once governed justifications for anti-systemic resistance, cannot be overcome

overnight. Therefore post-structuralist anarchism is an aspect in a gradual political theoretical movement, which is far from maturity, but which is creating a light by which we acknowledge the damages done to emancipation by attachments to “scientific correctness” and the supreme hypocrisies of the “official left” and “dictatorial egalitarianism” left in its wake. In opposition to the objective coherence forced onto “the masses” by intellectuals, post-structuralists have introduced a special task for this generation, to explore how the importance of horizontalism, openness and fluidity in the realm of social movement can be reinforced by theory and practice. As Schmidt (2009) explains it, popular theories have existed as classical music pieces, and now this generation faces the challenge to not play in key. Post-structuralists have played an integral role in this exploration.

Definitive of the post-structural approach is the refusal of smooth answers which ignore the mutually productive and diffuse nature of power relations and human subjectivity in society. For post-anarchists, radical political utopianism should be based on the potential of existing society, on experience and not on science, by rejecting “the idea of a rational social objectivity and an essentialist human subject whose unfolding co-incides with a social revolution aimed at the liberation of all humanity” (Newman 2009b: 207). They accept as their own thesis the presumption that resistance is best sketched in theory in attempts to acknowledge openings rather than unities because “trying to unify different discontents, to rally them together around a project of social transformation, is not only absurd but dangerous” (Singer 1999: 268).

Weinstein and Platt (1958:224-225) argue that those who believe in a radically better world often make the mistake of thinking that utopias should be much simpler than the current world. But the presumption that a future society needs to be simpler and more unified makes an enemy of complexity and conceals the dictatorial impetuses behind claims of certainty and simplicity. According to post-structuralists, rifts, antagonisms, and exclusions keep all identities constitutively open and therefore theories of social transcendence which dismiss these are deficient. We are setting ourselves up for disappointment at best and exploitation at worst if we rely on theorists to come up with fairytales of unproblematic futures toward which we can travel to find our human fullness. In other words we must not tackle radical sociology from the point of view that there are fixed totems of freedom. There are no fixed identities, and therefore there should be no grand narratives which ‘find’ them.

So while we may feel that intellectual gifts are spent most wisely in reasoning and argumentation with end-points, establishing 'positions' so to speak, there is another task which this generation now picks up through the young field of post-structuralism; and the task is to connect with the complex and unfixed nature of the subjectivities which define our realities and to let this supersede the worthy but now less intriguing task of building fixed schemas for final wins.

Ultimately I deliver an analysis of new activism's importance by way of critically exploring its promise in terms of its paradigmatic links with the "anarch-isation" of discourse. I suggest that more scholarly attention be afforded perspectives on revolution generated by anti-essentialist/postmodern/post-structuralist re-readings of anarchism so that we emerge not with another "-ism" or prefabricated answer, another doctrine, brand, label or dogma with which to limit the possibility of change. But rather, that we emerge with a hopefulness about the present that is based on a realistic acceptance of the subjective limits to change along with a defiant spirit to act courageously nonetheless. If we free thought from authoritarian models first, we allow ourselves to invent a form of politics which is not captured by rational truths held above individual experience.

Post-anarchism thus makes a call for new revolutionary metaphors which do not reduce human beings to established systems. It is a call for rhizomatic socialist futures. The image borrowed from philosophers Deleuze and Guattari is of the rhizome:

A root which sends out shoots in different directions and which connects with others in complex and unpredictable ways. The rhizome describes the nature of human interactions and it suggests that struggle is not about breaking free from constraints, but about defining new paths and discovering diversity within the roots system (Kinna 2005: 74).

The rhizome embraces connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity and rupture (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:7). Of course, one can argue that applying a non-rhizomatic essentialist approach allows one to be more analytical, more hopeful even, because the intellectual makes things more stable and therefore easier to reorganise (in thought), and end-points easier to imagine. Applying a post-structural approach on the other hand certainly means that more time will be spent on confirming the multiplicities and heterogeneities which fracture identities and drive moments of

'becoming' (instead of states of 'being') in which subjects brace thresholds, exposing the crossing and re-crossing of power with freedom.

These junctions remind us that we have a thoroughly disparate array of choices in the way that we tell our stories of social reality. This may be forgotten in the professionalised terrain of the intellectual today where it is hard to make sense of who the cadence of the theory must be in the service of. Particularly for those who set foot on the political theoretical stage of imagining radical utopias – is it the tone of certainty, of establishment, specialisation and indoctrination which best fuels the debate; or is it the tone of dissent, concern with the ill-defined and the marginal, which mostly aptly colours the space of theory in reality? As was the experience for me with this thesis, when thinking and writing about 'truth', it is easy to lose sense of whom or what the preservation of radical sociological thought is directed at; especially, because for many academics in this category of radical politics, one must go to a space mentally where one has not been physically. The role of the academic is therefore removed from the practical constructions, the survival, dismay and optimism of the people whose perspectives and actions he/she attempts to interpret. Yet the battle of the intellectual to accommodate experience through representation is an important one, a constant symbol of the conflictual and dubious nature of consensus and collective interest –an engine for political self-awareness; not an end to it. Therefore when theorists explore what may exist outside of extant society, the question must remain open, as I herein argue. It is defeating for the more humble and self-critical aspects of academia when certain reflections turn into bureaucratic claims to truth. It is ironic that the latter tendency is so common in the terrain of radical sociology since "the most fundamental operation of power is to have one's own particular interests accepted as the measure of what is legitimate" (Holmwood 1999:284).

But let's make no mistake, the conflict between the bleeding heart and the bloodless blueprint is not simply a bane of the field of political sociology, it is rather definitive of the questions asked. One can detect the existence of both strands of thinking in most theory; one line which is aimed strongly at the ideological impetuses for end-strategies, and another line which sees anti-mechanistic thought as that which best cultivates emancipatory images. Different areas of thought, different periods and cases attract these mutually enforcing strands in different proportions. Each perspective provides a progressive or regressive foothold on which the next

develops; political sociology is thus a discipline in which definitions are so interdependent that evolutions and reversals in the project for understanding are happening simultaneously with each particular emphasis. Therefore when post-anarchism transcends foundationalism in emancipation, it can reflect upon the nature of unity in left theory, but in doing this it must also sacrifice the benefits of essentialist utopias, such as coherent ideals and comprehensible strategies. For me, post-anarchism and the prefigurative processes which it highlights are not a new grand narrative; rather, it is an urging in this period that the anti-scientific “liquid utopias” be upgraded relative to the mechanistic “solid utopias” (Sargent 2010:114). Post-anarchism is a shift in the relative importance of the two lines of thought as it combines deconstruction with the political ideals of anarchism, ultimately calling for theory which “retains the concept of ideology yet rethinks it along non-essentialist lines” (Newman 2005b: 158). In the past flexible notions of freedom “were garbled into the administrative systems of control and progress” (Lowy 2010: ix). Post-structural versions are an invigorating stream which gives life to a certain type of emancipatory line, but does not necessarily replace other lines, and might broadly fit into the historical group widely delineated as “Romantic Socialism”⁹.

In spite of the various divergent accents, the scientific methods in the 19th and 20th century overwhelmed the dominant role of the sociologist in a certain way, aligning it with moral, rational leadership, and strategic pansophy. Today in light of post-anarchism, this “duty” of theorists seems unacceptable. It may have registered as unethical in many instances throughout history but this is being brought to consciousness with a renewed force today through prefigurative radicalism in social and political theory. Contemporary perspectives acknowledge that while we do indeed seek escape from domination, we seek this from within a present defined by power; we are therefore hopeful and open but uncertain of what the future can, should and will be. Theories about alternatives are required to reflect positions of unclarity if that is what constitutes the depiction of reality as it is experienced. For as long as we cannot know ourselves objectively, ambiguity will remain a component of our quest for emancipation. The aim of emancipation therefore cannot be the removal of ambiguities. To conclude with Emile Durkheim

⁹ Encompassing “populist humanism (Leo Tolstoy, Theodore Herzen); Utopian-Humanist Socialism (Charles Fourier, Erich Fromm); Libertarian Romantics (Pierre Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Pyotr Kropotkin, Gustav Landauer); Marxist Romanticism (Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse, Rosa Luxembourg and E.P Thompson) and 1968 Surrealism (Lowy 2010 : xiii).

(1974: 38 quoted in: Holmwood 1999: 287), “to will a morality other than that implied by the nature of society is to deny the latter and in consequence, oneself”. For as long as sociology imagines our greatest capacity for change as an oasis to come, we will deny ourselves a fuller narrative of our potential power vested within the direct actions of the present.

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