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Kosuch, Carolin (ed.). Anarchism and the Avant-Garde. Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective

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Le mot de la fin revient à Jean de Palacio, avec « Le somptuarisme de la décrépitude : sur un roman d'Hector Fleischmann ». Il nous y fait découvrir un écrivain « inconnu, même dans son propre pays » (191), auteur cependant d'une quarantaine de volumes à thème surtout galant ou libertin, de poèmes, et du roman dont il est question ici, qui met en scène « le dernier Dandy », reliant idéalement 1830 à la fin-de-siècle et prouvant une fois de plus – si besoin était – que tous les bons et beaux livres ne figurent pas nécessairement dans les minces annales de l'histoire littéraire officielle.

Ce recueil, on l'aura compris, offre une série fascinante d'aperçus qui témoignent de la variété et de la richesse étonnantes et encore insuffisamment appréciées de cette période, qu'on considère parfois à tort comme un simple moment de transition sans autre importance qu'archéologique. Il offrira une introduction fort utile à tout lecteur qui découvre pour la première fois la fin-de-siècle, et de belles surprises même aux explorateurs plus expérimentés.

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Kosuch, Carolin (ed.). *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde. Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective*. Leiden-Boston: Brill-Rodopi, 2019. 280 p.

What is an avant-garde? Who gets to determine it? And what kinds of connections may exist between political and literary, or artistic, avant-gardist movements? These are not new questions by any means, and possibly even less so when dealing with the relationships between one of the modern era's most controversial political ideologies – anarchism – and the numerous cultural movements that were born, developed, and eventually faded away during its heyday, between the late 1880s and the Second World War. This collection of essays provides the reader with a wide range of studies connecting this political philosophy with several important players in the field of culture, mostly regarding France. The main issues raised by practically all contributions are summarized in the introduction in three basic points: cross-pollination, the limits of convergence, and anti-authoritarianism as the main site of intersection.

Part 1 ("Frictions: Aesthetics or Politics") starts with a chapter by Richard Shryock, "The Symbolist Movement: Anarchism and the Avant-Garde in *Fin de Siècle* France", where the author goes back over the well-travelled terrain of the connections between anarchists and symbolists during and after the "terreur noire" of the 1890s. It provides a fairly complete overview of the studies on the intersection of the two movements – particularly as seen from the perspective of anglophone critics. As such, this chapter will serve as a useful introduction to the subject for those who approach it for the first time, highlighting as it does the sometimes very different takes on who influenced whom and to what extent, and the interminable nature of this dispute, where the only thing that can be said with any degree of certainty is that "the back and forth itself is a reality" (27).

The second chapter, Mark Antliff's, "Egoism, Homosexuality, and *Joie de vivre*: Jacob Epstein *Tomb of Oscar Wilde*", offers an unusual close study of the design and meaning of Wilde's tomb at the Père Lachaise Cemetery, in Paris, a monument that caused quite a stir at the time. Antliff evokes the protest led by André Colomer and the *Action d'art* group in favour of the monument, which had been censored by the city government for supposed immorality. The chapter provides useful and thorough background to present the *Action d'art* journal's "promotion and defense of Epstein's sculpture" (59) in the name of typically anarchist notions of free love and sexual liberation, and analyzes Colomer's philosophy as a combination of "Stirner's egoism through the lens of Bergson's metaphysics and Wilde's aestheticism" (62). Given the importance of the artists and writers involved in this group – in particular Gérard de

Lacaze-Duthiers – in developing an anarchist theory of aesthetics, and the little attention they have received so far, this contribution is particularly welcome.

In "A Politics of Technique: Fauvism and Anarchist Individualism", Patricia Leighton focuses on several significant artists connected to the Fauvist movement, known for its attempts "to politicize aesthetics and aestheticize politics in a new way" (72). Amongst their main influences, she identifies the irrationalism they inherited from Max Stirner. She then goes on to discuss the "spontaneity, primitivism, and extreme individualism" (81) of Vlaminck and his use of antinaturalistic colour, Derain's ironic paintings of military officers, and Van Dongen deciding to choose print (a medium for the people), rather than producing paintings to be sold to the bourgeoisie. Individualist, antimilitarist and anticolonial sentiments appear to compose the determining "cultural environment that inspired their work" (94).

Daniela Padularosa ("Anti-art? Dada and Anarchy") brings back the "existential nihilism" (102) of Hugo Ball and his followers, from the time of Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire – in a Switzerland considered "a social oasis in an otherwise war-driven Europe", where it would be possible "to start a new community, based on pacifism and antiwar sentiments" (101) – to the later Berlin version, closer to Marxism than to anarchism. Dada's search for linguistic freedom is seen as the result of an "intermingling of anti-bourgeois socialist thought, avant-garde aesthetics, and spirituality" (118).

Part 2 ("Fractions: Declining – Pioneering – Redeeming") opens with a chapter by David Weir on "Decadent Anarchism, Anarchistic Decadence: Contradictory Cultures, Complementary Politics". In this well thought-out and convincing piece, the author asks a question that, with minor modifications, summarizes many of the contributions presented in this volume: "whether a shared antipathy to bourgeois institutions and conventions is a sufficient reason for the alignment of decadence and anarchism on the basis of either politics or culture. The rather disappointing answer to that question is, unfortunately, 'yes and no'." (130). Weir rightly points out "the contradictory yet complementary relationship of anarchism and decadence", highlighting their differences – the elitist pessimism of the Decadents and the popular optimism of the Anarchists – as well as their similarities. A study of Baju, Mirbeau and Wilde, however, leads him to conclude that the two movements "were speaking two different languages to two very different audiences" (150).

Carolin Kosuch ("'We are too far ahead to be understood': Vanguard Creation in *Fin de Siècle* Anarchism") brings the reader to Berlin and Gustav Landauer's Poet Circle, where "nostalgia and eager anticipation of the future" (155) form an uneasy mix. The study highlights Landauer's little known activity as a literary critic and a proponent of social art, as well as the influence of his Jewish messianism on his view of the place of literature in society. In a similar vein, Gabriele Guerra ("Theocratic Anarchism? Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem in Switzerland: Anarchism, Messianism and the Avant-Garde") explores the "intersection of anarchist will", "religious longing" (177) and a romantic sensibility in the views of these two Jewish intellectuals.

The first chapter of Part 3 – "Focal Points: Art and Education in Local and Transnational Settings –, by Constance Bantman is entitled "Syndicalism and Art in France before 1914: Propaganda and Prefiguration". French anarcho-syndicalism did pay particular attention to culture, although its "cultural discourse and practices […] appear both more complex and more fragmented than those of anarchism" (198). It is this political strategy "centering on militant education and access to knowledge" (199) that is explored here. While the aims of the CGT were certainly not primarily cultural, this study shows how Pelletier, Sorel and others attempted to unite art and labour by blurring "the boundaries between art and militancy" (209) in order to achieve a true democratization of culture.

Federico Ferretti ("Anarchism, Geography and Painting: Élisée Reclus and Social Art") delves into the life of the father of modern geography, and a committed anarchist, to show how he associated numerous artists to his work, caring less about aesthetic debates than about the social content of their work. Very aware of the importance of visual representations in his developing field, Reclus paid close attention to all aspects of the production of his books and collaborated with artists such as František Kupka, the author of the striking illustrations of *L'Homme et la terre*, and many other of the greatest names in art at the time. Through his wide research, based on primary sources and original correspondence, Ferretti rebuilds the fascinating "wide network of intellectuals, activists and painters" that collaborated with the early anarchist geographers to produce work that was as scientifically innovative as it was visually stunning.

Piotr Laskowski's chapter, "Teaching Revolution through Arts? Anarchism, the Avant-Garde and Education Critically Revisited", delves into the question of the nature and the purpose of several anarchist attempts at constructing a free system of education, and illustrates "the intersections and divergences between avant-garde ideas and anarchists' heterogeneous educational propositions" (252). An analysis of the principles of anarchist pedagogy is conducted through a discussion of Tolstoy's famous school in Yasnaya Polyana, the differences between the individualist and the collectivist views of education (with abundant references to the experiences of Sébastien Faure and Paul Robin), and finally the Ferrer Centre in New York, a school meant for both young people and adults, seen as a unique attempt at using artistic creation "as a means of liberation, the very essence of education" (267). As to the possible conjunction of avant-garde and libertarian education, the author concludes that "their encounter was either superficial or accidental" (269).

This well-written and carefully researched book offers several very valid case studies of the interactions of specific writers and artists with the anarchist nebula. As such, it should be recommended reading for anybody who wants to explore this fascinating subject. What it does not provide, and what no such study can most likely provide, is a satisfactory theory of their interconnections. As one contributor pithily states: "Anarchist thought is multifaceted and compatible with different intellectual traditions" (121). Or again, "both the avant-garde movement and anarchism are multidimensional phenomena that comprise many, often contradictory, tendencies and currents" (251). Indeed, one could slightly alter one sentence from this book to show the near impossibility of going further than general statements about anarchists and avant-gardists being both allergic to authority: "One common denominator of Anarchism and [*insert the name of the literary or artistic movement of your choice here*] was their constant longing for 'spiritual freedom'" (107). Undoubtedly. Indeed, this was traditionally the argument made by anarchist critics in the militant press, who wanted to provide their movement with some noble ancestors picked amongst recognized cultural figures. It would seem that things, after all, have not changed much since that time.

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Stampfli, Anaïs. *La coprésence de langues dans le roman antillais contemporain*. iBooks. Berne: Peter Lang 2020, 454 p.

La présente monographie résulte d'une thèse soutenue en Lettres Modernes en 2016 à l'Université Grenoble-Alpes, et étudie la coprésence dans la prose romanesque antillaise du créole et du français, et de manière périphérique d'autres langues (l'espagnol et l'anglais). L'idée étant, comme le synthétise la chercheuse, de « donner une vision