

rative. In sum, this is a solid contribution to the political history of the French labour movement, one which readers both familiar with and new to the subject will find engaging.

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¹ Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-1938* (Cambridge, 1988), 85, 95-96.

² For a succinct argument to this effect, see William D. Irvine, "Domestic Politics and the Fall of France in 1940," in Joel Blatt, ed., *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments* (Providence, 1998), 85-99; for an account highlighting an ambivalent public mood of solemnity coupled with determination, see Robert J. Young, *France and the Origins of the Second World War* (New York, 1996), 113-129.

Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

I imagine I am not alone in having grown up with the definitions of anarchy memorably advanced by Johnny Rotten (aka John Lydon) and the Sex Pistols in their trenchant cultural analysis of 1977, "Anarchy in the U.K." Between repetitions of the chorus ("I wanna be anarchy"), Rotten/Lydon snarls two phrases that encapsulate a common understanding of anarchy: "Don't know what I want, but I know how to get it," and "I give a wrong time, stop a traffic line." We might nominate these the personal and political faces of contemporary commonsense anarchy. While the former articulates a drive toward untrammelled self-gratification, the latter implies a repertoire of strategies for interrupting business as usual and preventing the hostile corporate takeover of the lifeworld (the line continues "your future dream is a shopping scheme"). The lines certainly capture an anarchy richer than is often imagined in more academic accounts. They preserve an understanding of anarchy as tricksterish, libidinal, humorous and creative as well as angry and potentially destructive.

One of the most useful and impressive things about Allan Antliff's fine study of anarchism in American politics, culture, and art between 1908 and 1920 is the success with which it conveys precisely the multiple and creative aspects of anarchism condensed and recirculated by Johnny Rotten. By this, I do not mean simply to say that Antliff recovers the

numerous subdivisions of early twentieth-century anarchism, though he does helpfully describe these sometimes confusing and often overlapping categories: anarchist mutualism, anarchist collectivism, anarchist communism, anarchist syndicalism, anarchist individualism, parliamentary socialism, Bolshevism. Much more importantly, Antliff's readings of the lives and works of such anarchists as Robert Henri, Emma Goldman, Max Weber, Man Ray, Adolf Wolff, Carl Zigrosser, Robert Minor, Rockwell Kent, Bayard Boyesen, and Ananda Coomaraswamy show the striking variety of ways in which anarchist principles were manifested in poems, essays, plays, paintings, sculptures, readymades, and those unclassifiable artworks, individual human lives. Most of the cases Antliff examines in detail trace the connections between the personal and political faces of anarchism. More than this, the discussions deftly move from biography and history to formal analyses so as to illuminate each with the other.

Antliff sets out not only to locate anarchism at the center of American modernism, but also, by so doing, to correct three powerful myths that continue to dominate scholarly study of the period: American modernism is defined by degrees of stylistic abstraction; American modernism "was an exercise in formalist innovation" (2); and American modernism was "apolitical." To this end, he defines anarchism rather broadly, arguing that "an artist's anarchism could unfold entirely in an artistic context, as a mode of personal liberation" (1). Admitting the various forms anarchism might take, the many ways in which its personal, political, and aesthetic commitments might be balanced, Antliff posits as a unifying core Emma Goldman's famous distillation of the movement's aims: the creation of "a society where 'individual desires, tastes, and inclinations' could flourish" (1). The capaciousness and flexibility allowed by this minimal definition of anarchism at once enables some of Antliff's most compelling analyses and threatens to stretch the concept of anarchism beyond analytic utility. Antliff's standards for calling an artist "anarchist" often resemble those used by the United States government in the late 1910s. Anyone who spent much time in the company of anarchists, anyone who read books by anarchists, anyone who attended a lecture given by an anarchist, anyone who did much more than shake hands with an anarchist qualifies as an anarchist. While the book ultimately succeeds in locating anarchism as a force for coherence in American modernism, that success is bought with this occasional oversimplification and excessive expansion of "anarchism."

This problem is especially apparent in the book's early chapters. While those chapters provide important information about anarchist organizations, especially the Ferrer Center in New York, and while they recover personalities and political writings most modernist scholars might otherwise never know about, they also show Antliff making occasionally tenu-

ous connections between modernism and anarchism. Discussing Robert Henri's 1908 *Macbeth* exhibit, for example, Antliff first dubs the show "anarchist" because its critics did (17), a weak justification at best. He goes on to describe the event's importance, calling it "an attempt to establish a countercommunity in the arts whose defining features – individualism, freedom of expression, contemporary subject matter, and egalitarianism in art schools and exhibition spaces – owed much to the anarchist movement" (17). It is difficult to see how this set of aims is distinctly anarchist. Indeed, none of these objectives would much bother most liberals, neoliberals, or constitutional monarchists. Antliff next adduces the fact that Henri gave to his friend John Sloan a copy of Mikhail Bakunin's *God and the State*, which includes Bakunin's claim of the anarchist label. He amplifies this evidence with Henri's study of writings by Wilde and Tolstoy, whom Antliff calls anarchists though one wonders whether either thought of himself in those terms.

On the anarchy thus proven, Antliff then hangs an analysis of the aesthetic Henri promulgated: "[T]he art Henri encouraged was engaged, innovative, and modern by virtue of its grounding in the individuality of the artist. This discourse elevated artistic individualism as the guarantor of originality, authenticity of expression, and a relationship to contemporary life – in a word, the hallmarks of Henri's modernism were anarchist" (22). This argument verges on the tautological. Henri's anarchism depends on his aesthetic commitment to modern subject matter and artistic individualism. Those modernist aesthetic commitments are anarchist. But the anarchism of modern subject matter and artistic individualism depends on their institutionalization by Henri, an anarchist.

Happily, later chapters draw their connections with greater care and stronger evidence. Moreover, the later discussions explicitly treat the contradictions in some anarchist thought and the complex arguments conducted between exponents of various anarchisms. Antliff most admirably (and usefully) performs the latter service in his chapter on "Anarchist Unanimism." Growing out of the poetry of Jules Romains and imported to the U.S. by Randolph Bourne, Walter Pach, Albert Gleizes, and others, unanimism "argued that new forms of collective consciousness generated by the urban industrial environment were a progressive force that would bring about peace between nations and the coming socialist order" (167). On American shores, unanimism propagated competing strains. Carl Zigrosser, Antliff writes, "inscribed unanimist collectivism with the values of anarchism: spontaneity, self-government, and the affirmation of individual freedom" (172). Pach, on the other hand, explained in his writings on cubism and enacted in his own canvases a collectivist version of unanimism quite at odds with Zigrosser's individualist type (176-77). And

Gleizes argued explicitly that anarchism undermined unanimism (180). This argument works out in miniature the broader arguments about collectivism and individualism and the relation of artistic styles to each within modernism's vast variety. In so doing, it provides a model for understanding the political valences of aesthetic styles and schools, from cubism to futurism to vorticism and dadaism, without unnecessarily arguing that any of these is somehow "anarchist."

Antliff's strongest chapters recover and examine little known artists and writers Ananda Coomaraswamy and Rockwell Kent. In each case, Antliff provides strong evidence for the artist's anarchist inclinations. In his chapter on Kent, for example, Antliff can point not only to Kent's friendships with New York anarchists like Boyesen and Zigrosser, and not only to books Kent once owned or might have read, but to Kent's own writings about Nietzsche and anarchism, about art and anarchism. He traces Kent's membership in groups with a philosophical foundation in anarchism and Kent's activism while a teacher in Minnesota. He reproduces Kent's cover illustrations for anarchist periodicals. This strong and convincing portrait of Kent as an artist deeply influenced by anarchist thought informs Antliff's readings of Kent's engravings and prints, especially his illustrations for *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure*, Kent's own prose account of his sojourn in Alaska.

Antliff concludes his study with a chapter detailing the assaults on anarchism (and artists associated with anarchism) from both the Right (government repression in the United States) and the Left (the rising enthusiasm for Bolshevism among American radicals after the Russian Revolution). Tracing this two-front assault through the late-teens career of illustrator Robert Minor, Antliff powerfully shows how "the project of individualist liberation sustaining the movement's artistic discourse lost its currency" (183). On one hand, Antliff overstates the consequences of anarchism's "demise." Although the specific political aims of various anarchisms lost cultural purchase by 1920, the relationship between revolutionary politics and modernist culture remained. Antliff's account of anarchism's denouement should not be equated with an account of political modernism's denouement, since artists and writers across the political spectrum pursued linked aesthetic and political programs through the 1930s. On the other hand, though, Antliff is right to eulogize a vision, at once artistic and political, whose internationalist and utopian aspects remain appealing. Living, thinking, responding, and working in a society whose dominant voice was Woodrow Wilson's, railing against political dissent at a Flag Day rally in 1917 – "Woe to the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way in this day of high resolution!" – these artists sought to derail such discourses with all the tricks at their disposal.

Antliff's anarchist modernists are worth remembering, worth preserving as a cultural legacy, for the ways they resisted Wilson's voice, for the alternatives they proffered, alternatives like Robert Henri's declaration that his "love of mankind" was "individual, not national." One important service Antliff's book does for us at the turn of the twenty-first century is precisely to preserve these alternative voices and visions.

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David McNally, *Bodies of Meaning: Studies on Language, Labor, and Liberation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

This is a fashionable book with an untrendy message. Language and the body are perhaps the most captivating of subjects in the current theoretical moment. But McNally's purpose is a dissident one. He reminds us that for all the talk of bodies in what he considers, loosely, postmodern writing (which he labels as post-structuralist and deconstructive), the sensuous, material, productive body is an illusive non-presence: "linguistic idealism involves the subsumption of concrete bodies and relations – bodies, objects, social practices – under a set of conceptual abstractions." (3) It is not McNally's purpose to understate the importance of language, which he respects as the site of significant meaning. Rather, like other historical materialists who have challenged "the linguistic turn," he aims to reinvest language with materiality by connecting what is severed by collapsing substance into "text," an intellectual exercise that carries the interpretive and political cost of obscuring, even denying, the many "things" we seemingly, according to bourgeois ideology, cannot change, among them bodies.

Readers expecting an accounting of bodies at labour, in class struggle, resisting oppression, or engaged with historical movements, relations of love and sexuality, straddling biological need and the political unconscious, will not find it here. There is no social history of experience to be found in McNally's pages. Instead, what he develops is a rigorous theoretical accounting of the ways in which the materialist edifice, from Darwin through Marx to Walter Benjamin, reawakens an appreciation of the body's central place in human development, where both language and the struggle for liberation have parallel histories. McNally is particularly illuminating, albeit in ways that are relentlessly oppositional, with respect to Nietzsche's influence, encapsulated in the entirely bourgeois conception of an ideal-