Queering anarchism in post-2001 Buenos Aires

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Abstract
This article deals with the emerging field of queer anarchism, with a particular focus on the characteristics of this emerging paradigm in Buenos Aires. It draws on recent theoretical connections between queer theory and anarchism in the work of Gavin Brown, Richard Cleminson and Jamie Heckert, as well as in the work of a queer anarchist group in Buenos Aires called Proyectel Fetal. Set in the context of its historical precedents in anarcha-feminism, Proyectel Fetal's paradigm is illustrated with a variety of examples from their online publications, whilst also considering some of the critical reactions to their articles.

Keywords
anarchism, Argentina, feminism, queer, sexuality

The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms.
(Butler, 1990: 13)

Introduction: Argentinean anarchism since 2001
The purpose of this article is to outline practical and theoretical intersections between queer theory and anarchism and to relate these to anarchist culture in Buenos Aires since the economic crisis in 2001, paying particular attention to frictions that occur between queer and non-queer anarchists in the city. This introduction to the article teases out some of the effects the Argentinean economic crash in 2001 had on anarchism in the country. The main part of the article examines recent theoretical connections between queer theory and anarchism (Heckert, Cleminson, Brown) and the role of anarcha-feminism in the genealogy of what I term ‘queer anarchism’, leading on to a discussion of a particular queer anarchist

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group in Buenos Aires called Proyectil Fetal (Fetal Projectile), and the critical debate surrounding the group’s work.

When Argentina’s economy collapsed in 2001, the news spread across the world, showing images of masses of people storming banks and supermarkets, building roadblocks and bringing four consecutive governments to their knees within only two weeks. The crisis triggered a number of societal transformations, which, I suggest, in turn marked the nature of anarchism in the country. Argentineans were furious at the government for what they saw as criminally corrupt mismanagement of the country’s economy, and as their savings were frozen in the banks, they feared losing them through ravaging inflation. Simultaneously, large sectors of society lost their jobs. It was in this context that Argentineans began to build alternatives to traditional forms of economic production, decision-making and policy implementation. Two alternative structures that stand out due to their lasting influence on the economic and political situation were anarchist activities around workers’ and community self-management. I will look at these in turn. Thousands of businesses went bankrupt as a consequence of the economic crisis, leaving warehouses and other premises empty, some of which were subsequently squatted and used as housing. Other workplaces were recuperated and continued to be run cooperatively by former employees, albeit under continuous threat of forceful eviction, because of their defiance of the laws protecting private property. Popular neighbourhood assemblies were also set up, often in these same premises. Masses of people began to congregate in these assemblies, where they decided and carried out matters of local concern themselves, rather than relying on party politicians (Adamovsky, 2003; Sitrin, 2006). These transformations have now been largely reversed. As the economy recovered, people began losing interest in participating in the assemblies, and were quite happy to delegate decision-making to the government; other assemblies were shut down by force by the State apparatus because they infringed on private property, and now there are virtually none left. Nonetheless, as I suggest, even though these structures that were so widespread in society, particularly in the city of Buenos Aires, have been dismantled in the aftermath of 2001, they have had a lasting impact on Argentinean anarchism. Often, before the assemblies were dissolved, among the last participants left were anarchists; anarchists also continue to collaborate with those few cooperatively run businesses that are still in place. Why are anarchists enthusiastic about these structures? It is because both popular neighbourhood assemblies and cooperatively run businesses are usually marked by ‘horizontalism’ (in Spanish, horizontalidad, see Sitrin, 2006), a consensus-based approach to decision-making, which anarchists see as prefigurative for building a non-hierarchical, anarchist society. This can explain why some anarchists are trying to reinvigorate these structures that were so widespread in the immediate aftermath of 2001. Two examples are the Sociedad de Fomento and the Casa de Convivencia Anarquista of Banfield, a suburb of Buenos Aires. Anarchists also currently support the squatting of land in the Buenos Aires suburb Ingeniero Budge by thousands of families. There is also a notable rise in community garden projects, driven by anarchists and
alterglobalisationists. Examples are the *Huerta Orgásmica* (Orgazmic [sic!] Garden, with links to the commune *La Sala*), the garden of the anarcho-punk social centre *Tucuy Paj* (from Quechua, ‘For All’), and the community garden of Banfield. It seems fair to say, as Daniel Barrett has argued in his monumental map of Latin American anarchism, that the impulse Argentinean anarchism received in 2001 is the strongest impulse since the heyday of Argentinean anarchism in the early 20th century (Barrett, 2007). It has also become apparent that the anarchist movement of Buenos Aires is not made up of one unified group, but it is made up of a diverse set of groups and activities, some of whose interests and perspectives coincide, and others differ. The crisis has provided an impulse for the creation of squats and squatted community centres, often influenced by anarcho-punks, which has permanently marked the nature of anarchism in Argentina. Within anarchist circles, there is also, to this date, an increased readiness to form workers’ and consumers’ cooperatives. *La Sala* (selling cleaning products), *Tucuy Paj* (a consumers’ cooperative) and *La Gomera* (a printing cooperative) are examples of anarchist cooperatives that have been working for years, although not uninterrupted by internal disputes. All in all, 2001 has been a catalyst for an increased and diversified anarchist movement in Argentina.

During my last research trip to Buenos Aires in 2007–2008, I met Leonor Silvestri, a member of *Proyectil Fetal*, a group founded in 2007 that calls itself anarchist feminist queer. Browsing through the group’s articles in an anarchist newspaper and online, particularly on their blog (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2009b) and on the website of *Indymedia Argentina*, quickly made it clear that with ‘queer’, they were explicitly referring to Butlerian queer theory. On Silvestri’s various blogs (for an overview, see her blogger profile: Silvestri, 2009), her particular synthesis between punk, anarchism, feminism and queer theory becomes apparent. I was intrigued by the possibility of specifically combining queer theory and anarchism, and began looking for other work on the intersections between the two. It is a rather young field of enquiry, with first sustained theories provided over the last few years by Jamie Heckert (2005), Gavin Brown (2007, 2009) and Richard Cleminson (2008), as will be laid out later. There have been ongoing tensions surrounding sexuality in anarchist politics in Argentina, just as they have existed in anarchism in other countries, dating back to anarcha-feminist interventions since the late 19th century. Emma Goldman is a figure who stands at the heart of this historical conflict. But I am getting ahead of myself. Let us first look at what anarchism is, before dealing with the disputed field of sexuality from an anarchist perspective.

**Anarchism**

Although scholars, notably Robert Graham, have identified a host of texts going as far back as 300 CE as containing anarchist ideas, anarchism as a systematic political philosophy is generally regarded to be a much more recent phenomenon (Graham, 2005: xi). The story of philosophical anarchism is sometimes considered
to begin in 1793 with the publication of William Godwin’s *Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (Pessin and Pucciarelli, 1997: 5). Since Godwin, a vast body of theoretical writing has been published, for example by Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who is considered to be the first person to describe himself as an anarchist in 1840 (Graham, 2005: xii). Anarchist communism, the most widespread form of anarchism throughout its history, was ‘embraced not only by Kropotkin and [Carlo] Cafiero, but by numerous other anarchists, such as Elisée Reclus, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Luigi Galleani, Shifu, Jean Grave, Errico Malatesta, Sébastien Faure, Hatta Shuzo and the “pure anarchists” of Japan, and many anarcho-syndicalists’ (Graham, 3 May, 2008).

But of course, anarchism has never only been a philosophy, but also an ethics of action, often inspired by the thought and propaganda of anarchist agitators, resulting in vast workers’ and popular movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, be it in Spain, Italy, Argentina, or the Ukraine. This is the period often referred to as classical anarchism. Anarchist revolutions took place in the Ukraine (1918–21) and Spain (1936–9) (Graham, 2005: 304, 477, 482). Anarchism’s global historical significance has been stressed by the Anarchist Studies Network:

over the last two decades, academics have slowly begun to rediscover the historical significance of anarchism, which, as Benedict Anderson recently had to remind his fellow historians, was for a time the main vehicle of global opposition to industrial capitalism, autocracy, latifundism, and imperialism. Scholars have started to study the influence of anarchism on early Korean and Filipino national liberation struggles, movements for birth control from Barcelona to Boston, Latin American labor history, Jewish immigrant life, the development of modern sociology and geography, the French Resistance, debates over eugenics and Social Darwinism, modern art and Modern Schools, avant-garde film and popular music, revolutions from Mexico to China to Russia itself. (Anarchist Studies Network, 2008)

But what characterizes the anarchist philosophy? The term ‘anarchism’ is derived from the Greek for ‘no ruler’ (Graham, 2005: xi). Many definitions have been made of anarchism. The essence of this philosophy is a deep questioning of hierarchies and a critique of exploitation and domination, with a strong dedication to equality and strategy for change. If a feminist critique centres on the concept of patriarchy, the lynchpin of an anarchist critique is the more general concept of hierarchy. If combined, feminism plus anarchism become anarchist feminism, or anarcha-feminism, a strand of thought that plays an essential part in the genealogy of queer anarchism.

A ‘Queer Anarchism’?

Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) was written as a contribution to feminist theory, and only later was attributed the status of one of the founding texts of
queer theory. Queer theory constitutes a major intervention in contemporary feminist debate, and thus it does not come as a surprise that contemporary anarchafeminism would also draw on queer theory. I understand queer theory broadly as the study of heteronormativity and other normative discourses related to sexuality and gender. Marxist queer theorists subject these concerns to a broader critique of capitalism (Hennessy, 1996, 2000; Morton, 2001). The critique of capitalism from a queer perspective has led to the invention of concepts such as ‘homonormativity’, a term coined by Lisa Duggan to support her criticism of a particular current within contemporary gay politics which she considers to be highly complicit with neoliberalism (Duggan, 2002). ‘Queer anarchism’, then, critically assesses hegemonic discourses related not only to gender and sexuality, but to any form of domination, including but not reduced to a critique of the mechanics of exploitation and domination that exist within capitalism. This field has not actually been termed as such, although a recent call for papers specks of queering anarchism (Shannon and Rogue, 2008) and Heckert has employed the term queer anarchy (Heckert, 2005: 54). However, although Heckert does not rule out that there may be scope in a ‘(more) explicitly anarchist queer theory’ (2005: 248), he himself prefers not to apply the label ‘queer anarchism’ for the purposes of his own research (Heckert, 2005: 81). His reasons for doing so are due to common associations with the term ‘queer’ in anglophone countries: ‘the word queer brings with it associations of (gendered and sexualized) transgression and, more specifically, homosexuality. Thus, at the same time as it provides a radical critique of identity politics, queer anarchism may maintain some of identity politics’ limitations’ (2005: 248). In order to avoid these pitfalls, Heckert theorizes anarchism as an ethics of relationships instead, an approach which, as he argues, effectively queers anarchism:

[emphasis]emphasising an ethics of relationships as the core of anarchist criticisms and ideals encourages a more explicit turn to queer and feminist politics and to issues of the ‘private’ sphere, including ‘personal’ relationships, sexuality and emotions. A relational understanding of anarchism, then, must break down the divisions of public/private, individual/collective, autonomous/relation, hetero/homo, justice/care and other binaries that sustain the State apparatus and state-forms. (Heckert, 2005: 249)

This turn to issues of the ‘private’ sphere, resonating with both the Second Wave feminist conviction that the personal is political, and poststructuralism’s challenge to binary oppositions, is advocated by Proyectil Fetal, the Buenos Aires queer anarchist feminist group that I will consider in more detail later. The group maintains that ‘the sexual binary is an ideological apparatus of the State, which, as a social construct, produces a fiction whose objective is to falsify economic, political and ideological differences as facts of nature, and thereby perpetuates them’ (Proyectil Fetal, 2008c). Proyectil Fetal consider along poststructuralist lines that we have internalized state-forms; in other words, that domination is contained in the very way we feel and think, and must be targeted there, in order to ‘explode the very basis of the domination that resides within our hearts... All that are oppressed
need to be free, of others and of themselves’ (2008c). Following this logic, *Proyectil Fetal* have reached the conclusion that ‘without a profound self-emancipation from all the economic interests that are naturalized in our bodies, products of the society of control, even if the State were abolished, oppression and practices of domination will persist’ (2008c).

Combining a reading of Heckert with a Marxist theory of alienation based on Holloway’s *Zapatismo* (2002), Brown redefines ‘queer’ as an ideology that is opposed to the capitalist ‘separating of people from their own doing’ (Brown, 2007: 197). Brown purports that the queer activists he investigates ‘oppose and contest the complacent politics of mainstream gay politicians who actively work to win gay people’s compliance to a depoliticised culture based on domesticity and privatised consumption’ (Brown, 2007).

In a less explicitly queer anarchist vein, Cleminson (2008) has provided a painstaking argument for subjecting the history of anarchist attitudes to sexuality to a poststructuralist reading. Unlike Heckert and Brown, Cleminson develops a reading of anarchism and sexuality directly on the basis of his readings of Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu, as well as poststructuralist anarchist theorists Saul Newman, Lewis Call and Todd May, without any reference to self-identified queer theorists. He argues for an anti-essentialist anarchism:

> for the sake of a more effective social movement and anarchist historiography, we need to reject an ontological anarchism which is based on fixed structures and human essences in order to ‘anarchize’ the way we think, equipping ourselves with other strategies outside of these structures and essences. (Cleminson, 2008: 18)

This makes it clear that within anarchism, one can find a variety of paradigms, and that some of these paradigms are incompatible with the anti-essentialism characteristic of feminist, queer and poststructuralist theory. The tensions in these various approaches to anarchism will become particularly pertinent in relation to the contemporary Argentinean anarchisms investigated in my case study. Not all queer theorists are anarchists, of course, and not all anarchists are queer theorists, although some maintain that both traditions share historical linkages (Heckert, 2005: 49) and form a multifaceted contemporary alliance which has the power to defy the laws of neoliberalism and homonormativity (Brown, 2009). As Heckert states, ‘while anarchism must necessarily challenge hierarchies of gender and sexuality in order to be consistent with a critique of all forms of domination, “queer” need not necessarily be anarchist’ (Heckert, 2005: 49). The scope of my article does not allow for an in-depth discussion of Heckert’s argument. However, it can be said that integrating queer theory and anarchism helps him address what he sees as the four main criticisms generally made of queer theory: its neglect of issues of gender; its homocentricity; its promotion of ‘individualistic sexual transgression which is consistent with capitalism’; and, finally, its over-emphasis on ‘textual deconstruction and a cultural politics of knowledge’, with a converse lack of ‘institutional… and material engagement’ (Heckert, 2005: 49). Broadly, the reason why anarchism is a
useful framework within which to place queer theory, is because it provides a more comprehensive ethical framework which explicitly opposes all forms of oppression. Much like Marxist approaches to queer theory, queer anarchism can prevent sexuality from taking an isolated, primordial role neglecting capitalist and gender oppression, with which it is entwined. As Heckert puts it, ‘[i]n order for queer politics to successfully disrupt the hetero/homo division, it must also disrupt all the hierarchical binaries with which it is intertwined. These hierarchies must be challenged in all relationships, not only sexual ones’ (emphasis in original, Heckert, 2005: 58).

Such attempts to link seemingly disparate concerns become pertinent early on in the Argentinean context when considering the history of anarchist feminism in the country. As Hélène Finet argues, in turn-of-the-century Argentina, ‘anarchist feminist propaganda… is inseparable from a growing awareness of the mechanisms of economic and social exploitation of Argentinean women with immigrant origins. It materializes these working women’s expectations within a vast project for a libertarian society’ (Finet, 2006: 138).

In a nutshell, the project of queer anarchism critically assesses hetero-normativity and other hegemonic discourses related not only to sexuality, but to any form of domination, for example economic domination, by placing queer theory within the wider political framework of anarchism. It constitutes an anarchism that is enriched by insights from queer theory. Whether anarchism really needs queer theory, is a disputed question, which resonates with the century-old debate whether anarchism needs feminism. As Maxine Molyneux wrote:

[b]y the 1880s there had emerged within the European Anarchist movement a distinctive feminist current, represented by writers such as ‘Soledad Gustavo’ (Teresa Mañe) and Teresa Claramunt, just as within the movement in North America these ideas were developed by Voltairine de Cleyre, Emma Goldman, and others. Some of these writers were already being published in Argentina in the 1880s, and in the Anarchist press critiques of the family appeared together with editorials supporting ‘feminism’, by then a term in current usage. The main impulse for anarchist feminism came from Spanish activists, but Italian exiles like Mclavestra and Pietro Gori gave support to feminist ideas in their journals and articles. (Molyneux, 1986: 123)

Emma Goldman fought hard to convince her comrades of the need to incorporate feminist ideas into anarchism. When she came to Paris to do propaganda work in 1900, some French anarchist groups decided to exclude the material she had brought on sex from their conferences (Goldman, 1988 [1931]: 271). She recounts a conversation with Kropotkin, who provoked her with the following comment regarding the anarchist paper Free Society: ‘The paper is doing splendid work…but it would do more if it would not waste so much space discussing sex’ (Goldman, 1988 [1931]: 253). Goldman retorts:

[a]ll right, dear comrade, when I have reached your age, the sex question may no longer be of importance to me. But it is now, and it is a tremendous factor for
thousands, millions even, of young people. Peter [Kropotkin] stopped short, an amused smile lighting up his kindly face. ‘Fancy, I didn’t think of that’, he replied. ‘Perhaps you are right, after all’. (Goldman, 1988 [1931], emphasis in original)

On the whole, however, Goldman affirms that, in her own ranks, she was very much alone with her feminist concerns (1988 [1931]: 225).

Queering anarchism in contemporary Buenos Aires

Today, despite considerable resistance from within the anarchist movement, the Buenos Aires-based group *Proyectil Fetal* is promoting a ‘queer anarchism feminism which unsettles the normativity of the hegemonic forms of sexual identity, in order to create new definitions of the subject’ (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2008b), which leads the group to proclaim that ‘[o]ur gender expressions are multiple, irreducible to a single logic or category’ (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2008c). *Proyectil Fetal* is a group made up of two core members, Leonor Silvestri and Laura Contrera, who have both attended university in Buenos Aires and are in their early 30s. *Proyectil Fetal* had its first experience as a group at the 22nd Latin American Women’s Congress in the province of Córdoba, Argentina on 13–15 October 2007, where they felt the necessity to articulate an anarcha-feminism in opposition to the Catholic anti-abortion lobby and Left party feminisms dominating this conference (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2009a). Using colourful language, *Proyectil Fetal* reject the latter as ‘authoritarian party organisations which, like sanitary towels, precisely to prevent overflow and to collect followers, foster their “feminine wings”, always assigning them considerably less importance than “the great struggle”’ (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2008b). By contrast, *Proyectil Fetal’s* conviction is that ‘the so-called “gender question” is not just another point on the agenda, but the condition *sine qua non* for a radical change of everything’ (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2007a). Their queer anarchism is not only based on insights from second-wave feminism and queer theory, but also on a reading of Goldman and her anarcha-feminist contemporaries in Argentina, such as Juana Rouco Buela and the editorial group of *La Voz de la Mujer* (*Woman’s Voice*), one of the first periodicals written for and by women (Finet, 2009: 15). *Proyectil Fetal* argue that

the germ of some of the ideas nourishing us (poststructuralist, anti-specieist, individualist) could already be found in the most potent voices of early anarchism, even though it was not the type of anarchism that would consolidate itself in our country: for example, Emma Goldman, Bakunin, Severino di Giovanni, [Emile] Armand. (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2009a)

They redeploy signature phrases used by the editorial collective of *La Voz de la Mujer* in 1896. ‘No God, No Boss, No Husband’ (Finet, 2009: 17) becomes ‘Without God, without a Husband, without a Boss, without a Political Party’ (*Proyectil Fetal* and Centro Social Tucuy Paj, 2008), and the phrase ‘we demand
our bit of pleasure in the banquet of life’ is used verbatim (Finet, 2009: 16; *Proyectil Fetal*, 2008c). However, while the ‘we’ in the latter referred to ‘women’ in the original demand, *Proyectil Fetal* argue against the binary construction of gender and extend the revolutionary subject to all counter-hegemonic identities relating to sex, gender, sexual practices and ethnicity: ‘our anarchism is queer, dirty Latin American, perverse, and inconvenient. Our clocks are not a century slow with regard to what is happening today in the streets of the oppressed and the counter-hegemonic abnormal’ (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2008c). Importantly, *Proyectil Fetal*’s definition of women is not bound to biology, but people are free to self-identify as women ‘without a medical examination’ (*Proyectil Fetal* and Centro Social Tucuy Paj, 2008). *Proyectil Fetal* recognize women’s specific oppression, whilst also calling for the inclusion of ‘any radical and alternative, non-heteronormative gender expression’ in the feminist agenda (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2007a), arguing that there are ‘problems, many of which exclusively affect women, and others are only shared by non-hegemonic gender expressions (transvestites, transgender and intersex people)’ (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2007b).

Similarly to *La Voz de la Mujer* over a century earlier, *Proyectil Fetal*’s work is causing an outcry among anarchists in today’s Buenos Aires. In some respects, the reasons for this outcry are similar to the criticism wielded a century ago: in both instances, critics see women’s emancipation as secondary on the revolutionary agenda. If in 1896, it appears that the work of the women editing *La Voz de la Mujer* was greeted with the words ‘[l]et our emancipation come first, and then, when we men are emancipated and free, we shall see about yours’ (Molyneux, 1986: 128), *Proyectil Fetal*’s concerns are brushed aside because they focus on sexual identity and gender oppression, rather than the oppression of the working class. One such critic wonders,

are [*Proyectil Fetal*] unaware of current affairs? One comrade of MST\(^{10}\) Neuquén assassinated, two workers killed in Acindar, one in Astillero Rio Santiago...the police is torturing and imprisoning comrades from the Casino, etc etc etc... What of [*Proyectil Fetal*’s proposal] can be of interest to anarchist comrades involved in the struggle/what of this can be of interest to those exploited by Capital and State, in order to support their struggle for freedom as a class and as a society...?... Truth be told, I am not at all interested in this postmodern proposal. (Anónimo, 26 February, 2008)

*Proyectil Fetal*’s texts receive a mixed response on Argentina’s *Indymedia* website. While some applaud their interventions, others attack their texts for being too difficult, for being ‘postmodern’, too theoretical, ‘ludic’ exploits of ‘bored, rich, snobby women’, as well as for the group’s anti-Marxist prejudice (*Proyectil Fetal*, 2008b, 2008d). Various readers reject their work outright as not anarchist: ‘THEY ARE NOT ANARCHISTS! THEY ARE NOT OUR COMRADES!’ (Vando, 2008), ‘(g) back to bourgeois Belgrano,’\(^{11}\) which is where you belong. You have no business with anarchists’ (Algunx, 2008). Such violent reactions could be
explained by the fact that Proyectil Fetal's articles are polemic. They also contain a certain amount of jargon taken from queer theory and poststructuralism, which alienates both those readers who are unfamiliar with academic jargon, as well as those academically trained readers that reject poststructuralism. Moreover, Proyectil Fetal sometimes take this jargon for granted and leave basic poststructuralist assumptions unjustified. As one critic writes, their text ‘El Sexo de tus Revoluciones’ ‘starts off declaring as the truth what instead it should demonstrate’ (P. M., 2008). Finally, the text's anti-Marxism is based on a simplistic conception of Marxism, which does not account for the variety of currents within this political philosophy:

[i]f there is one thing we have learned from the death of the hegemony of positivism (i.e. the Marxist conception – historically proven wrong – that ‘revolution’ is brought about scientifically, in the same way at all times), it is that the barricades are multiple, because the forms of subjugation and domination are multiple... What Marxism has called the ‘principal enemy or issue’ does not exist, a view which, sadly, is held by a number of self-proclaimed anarchists. Strategic priorities and immediate emergencies are not the same independently of time, nor are they something that can be compressed to ‘the primordial’. (Proyectil Fetal, 2008b)

This is a polemic attack on both Marxism and those anarchists who believe that the first and foremost thing that needs to be done away with, and that can be done away with in isolation, is class. Because they prioritize class struggle, ‘class-struggle anarchists’ sometimes disregard the other instances of oppression with which ‘class’ is intertwined that Heckert, among others, has drawn our attention to. By calling them ‘self-proclaimed’, Proyectil Fetal are questioning whether such class-struggle anarchists really are anarchists. Unsurprisingly, some class struggle anarchists would feel provoked by such an allegation, and throw the accusation back at Proyectil Fetal on the grounds that they are too middle-class. In contrast to certain class-struggle anarchists, queer anarchists feel the need to stress the complex nature of oppression, and, conversely, the multiple fights that need to be fought, on ‘multiple barricades’, as Proyectil Fetal call it in the foregoing excerpt. They insist that ‘power circulates, it is not that simply embodied in one single place, where it could be dethroned’ (Proyectil Fetal, 2008b). This poststructuralist conception of power is not shared by all of the contemporary anarchist community in Buenos Aires, as the critical reactions to Proyectil Fetal’s articles show. Some of the class-struggle anarchists criticizing Proyectil Fetal's work also show a clear rejection of theory, poststructuralist or otherwise, which leads one commentator to criticize those readers who,

when a critical assessment of the predominant forms of activity is not presented in conjunction with an immediately applicable, ‘concrete’ proposal, do not care if the criticism is justified or not, but instead come out to lecture from the culture of work: you are not doing anything, ‘you are just talking, we are at least doing something, even though we are doing it badly’. (Ricardo, 2008)
By referring to those who ‘lecture from a culture of work’, this critic is addressing those class-struggle oriented readers whom he believes criticize Proyectil Fetal’s lack of engagement with the working class and contrast it with their own, albeit flawed, engagement with the working class.

All in all, it is ironic that Proyectil Fetal betray their ostensibly anti-binary attitude by basing their criticism of class-struggle anarchism and Marxism on such a reductionist construction of Marxist thought. However, they emphasize that their arguments are subject to ‘constant revision’ (Proyectil Fetal, 12 March 2009a), and their more recent work shows that they are indeed revising some of their attitudes and strategic priorities. On the other hand, their philosophy is spread out over a variety of articles, which means that an attentive reader can find that questions raised in one article are answered in another. One of the things that caused an outcry on Indymedia Argentina was certainly the simplistic representation of Marxism in ‘El Sexo de tus Revoluciones’, and, all in all, oversimplified views of Marxism, poststructuralism and queer theory provide a lot of ground for insults and arguments between Proyectil Fetal and anarchists who are more oriented towards class struggle. The two have the same goal: an anarchist society. However, their worldviews and strategies are profoundly different.

**Conclusion**

In this article I have sought to outline recent intersections between queer theory and anarchism as they have begun to be theorized by Brown and Cleminson, and particularly by Heckert. Queer anarchism, whether in its explicit or more frequent implicit form, is a young field of enquiry. Therefore, as can be expected, many areas of research are waiting to be explored from a queer anarchist perspective. Leonor Silvestri and Laura Contrera of Proyectil Fetal have started blogs dealing with BDSM, sodomy, sexual fantasies, polyamory and such controversial topics as paedophilia and pornography, from an overtly queer anarchist perspective. Based on my understanding of the queer anarchist paradigm, I have sketched some of the frictions that occur between class-struggle anarchists and queer anarchists in present-day Buenos Aires, and traced their conflict to flawed paradigmatic assumptions on either side – the oversimplified view of Marxism that Proyectil Fetal use in a polemic article on the one hand, and the outright rejection of poststructuralist thought, in particular by class struggle anarchists, on the other.

The queer anarchism propagated by Proyectil Fetal provides a framework for a deep analysis of power that allows anarchists to analyse their everyday practices and ways of thinking, in order to develop practices that are in accord with their anarchist ideal of non-exploitative, non-hierarchal relationships. Therefore there is undoubtedly scope in civil discussion between class-struggle anarchists and queer anarchists. Butler’s warning that ‘[t]he effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms’ (Butler, 1990: 13), however, should not be taken lightly either by Proyectil Fetal itself, or by its critics. The heated
discussions on *Indymedia Argentina* show that queering anarchism is not an easy process; it creates animosity because it represents a radical, poststructuralist break with the Marxist paradigm. The theory wars of the 1990s are far from over, most certainly so in Buenos Aires.

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**Notes**

1. I have undertaken three field trips to Buenos Aires between 2006 and 2008 participating in and observing the anarchist community there. The following account of the influence of the economic crisis on the anarchist movement is based on my participant observation in Buenos Aires in the *Federación Libertaria Argentina* (Argentinean Anarchist Federation), the anarcho-punk squat *Tuay Paj* and the *Casa de Convivencia Anarquista*, unless otherwise indicated. My predominant participant observation in these particular anarchist groups invariably shaped my field of vision. As far as the many other anarchist groups and individuals in the city are concerned, I rely on Daniel Barrett’s map of Argentinean anarchism (see Barrett, 2007), as well as my archive of some of these groups’ paper and online publications.


3. To distinguish anarchists from alterglobalizationists, the latter may or may not identify with any particular ideology or even belong to a leftist party, while anarchists are opposed to party politics, and, in calling themselves anarchists, clearly identify themselves with the anarchist ideology. This often implicit distinction however, does not impede collaboration between anarchists and alterglobalizationists.

4. Anarcho-punk is, to put it crudely, a syntheses between anarchist and punk philosophy, which results in a particular counter-cultural, do-it-yourself lifestyle. For a recent study of anarcho-punk, see Nicholas, 2005, 2007.

5. Lucy Nicholas has investigated the synthesis between queer, punk, feminism and anarchism in relation to the Australian anarcho-punk scene (Nicholas, 2005, 2007).

6. There are of course many different paradigmatic approaches to the conjoined study of anarchism and sexuality, even to this date, despite the current poststructuralist orthodoxy. David Berry’s work (2004) is an example of a recent, non-poststructuralist investigation of anarchism and sexuality. An extensive reading list on anarchism and sexuality can be found on the Anarchist Studies website, see Anarchist Studies Network (2009).
7. Proyectil Fetal’s texts as well as reactions to their texts are originally in Spanish. All translations are mine.

8. My translation of ‘[l]a propagande féministe anarchiste... est indissociable du processus de prise de conscience des mécanismes de l’exploitation économique et sociale des femmes argentine issues de l’immigration. Elle matérialise les attentes de ces ouvrières dans un vaste projet de société libertaire’.

9. This article was first published in print (Proyectil Fetal, 2008a).

10. Movimiento Socialista por los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers’ Movement).

11. Belgrano is a rich neighbourhood of Buenos Aires.

References


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