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What is This?

CRITIQUE *of* ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology and anarchy: Romance, horror or science fiction?

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Abstract
This article introduces the special issue by considering some of the relations between anthropology and anarchy, real and potential. Anarchy, I suggest, is a word already burdened with strong (and often divergent) emotional overtones: it is invested with both romance and horror. These overtones point to related ideas about human nature as either social and peaceable or antagonistic and competitive. But are these parables about human nature just science fiction, political claims dressed up in the garb of neutral observations of actually existing humanity? Time and again, the questions raised by anarchy point to anthropology for their resolution, particularly to the ethnographic record and the conclusions that might be drawn from its analysis. Yet the ethnographic record yields no easy resolution to these questions, in part, I argue, because of this prior overburdening which becomes particularly acute when the ethnographic subjects are already politically marginalized. In this introduction, I take a different tack, attempting to approach anarchy as banal and everyday, as one kind of social relation among others, and as thus amenable itself to ethnographic observation not only 'out there' and 'back then' but here and now.

Anarchy: the word itself seems to stir a visceral reaction.[1] Perhaps terrifying images of rudderless chaos or a world of brute force and pointless destruction spring to mind. Or, perhaps one might think of quite the opposite: harmony between free agents, and human needs met through a multiplicity of voluntary associations. Horror or romance,[2] either way, the word provokes a kind of explicitness about what one imagines humans to be at core: what they are capable of, prone to, and require. Perhaps it is for this reason that the word is capable of provoking such

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strong reactions of such wildly differing kinds: the terrain of debate is the grounds of human being itself. Such debates are particularly provocative for anthropologists, who carry on that discipline which claims to offer some knowledge of the practices, capacities and potentialities of mankind. In this special issue, a series of anthropologists respond to the provocation of anarchy. The effort here is not one of *anarchism*, that is, of using anthropology as a springboard for promoting an imagined anarchist future. Rather, this is an attempt to grapple with anarchy as a concept that is already at work in the world, both in anthropologists' analytical frames and/or in those of their informants.

When I mentioned this project to a prominent anthropologist (one who has published influentially on the state) she commented candidly that 'anarchy scares me'. She went on to explain that she was disturbed by romantic ideas about anarchy that circulate and the way these had impacted recent ethnography. I agree that the impacts of the concept of anarchy in ethnography are worth tracking, but I was struck by her apparently sincere expression of fear. Why fear? Why be so provoked, rather than just merely interested? Such visceral reactions to a concept should raise a warning flag for anthropologists. What is it about anarchy which is so provocative? And how does that effect our analytical treatment of it? Is it because anarchy seems to be either romance or horror that it has comparatively rarely been treated as a subject for contemporary social science?

Before I explore these ideas, a confession: my own background is in the anthropology of everyday politics, the state and development, and it is through this literature that I read the anthropological engagement with anarchy. This makes a certain kind of sense, because one of the meanings, the root meaning, of anarchy is 'without a ruler' (from '*an*' as in 'not' or 'without', and '*arkhos*' meaning 'ruler'), as opposed to hierarchy, monarchy, oligarchy, autarchy, patriarchy, matriarchy and so on, which describe different kinds of politics and leadership. Anarchy alone among these various '-archies' refers to a situation of no rulers or forms of rule. One of the key definitions of a state, meanwhile, is that it is a social relationship that includes, minimally, stratification between rulers and the ruled, authorities, and law (Sneath, 2007: 10).[3] Thus one of the core meanings of anarchy is the absence of this core characteristic of states. The engagement with anarchy could be read from many perspectives (anti-capitalism, gender equality, various forms of activism), but in this introduction, I focus on that tension between 'archy' and 'anarchy', rule and non-rule, state and non-state.

The contrast between how anthropologists have recently approached the state and how they have approached anarchy could not be more pronounced. In contrast to the visceral response to anarchy, the proposal that there can usefully be an anthropology of the 'state' elicits almost no visceral reaction at all. To the contrary, the state, we are used to hearing now, is 'banal' (Gupta, 2006: 13). It has become a truism that states operate through minute routines and the intricate, 'mundane' and 'ordinary' details of everyday processes (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 984). This mundanity is also thought to be surprisingly extensive. It is present in many guises, we are told, the more so just where you least expect it: in intimate realms,

techniques of the body and subjectivity (Stoler, 2002), in the ordering of space and time (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002), and even on 'the margins of the state' (Das and Poole, 2004). It does seem that, in noting that the apparent divide between state and society is itself another 'state effect', and in the enthusiasm to develop 'the project of an anthropology of the state ... that always questions the boundedness of the state' (Anjaria, 2011: 63) some analytical clarity has been lost. To take one example, although there are many: Aretxega, drawing on Trouillot (2001), defines the state as 'an open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional or geographical fixity' (Aretxega, 2003: 398) and also as an 'incoherent, multi-faceted ensemble of power relations and a vehicle for massive domination ... not a thing, system or subject, but significantly an unbounded terrain of powers and techniques' (Brown, 1995, cited in Aretxega, 2003: 398). Clearly inspired here by the governmentality literature, Aretxega provides a sweeping definition of the state as unbounded but leaves no room to plausibly answer the question 'what, then, is the state not?' The cumulative effect of this literature is to produce the sense of the state as not only everyday and mundane, but also all-pervasive and ever-present.

David Nugent (2010) has recently noted that many of the most influential studies of state formation have focused on the state as an accomplished project, with studies varying from one another on the question of how this accomplishment was or is achieved. He cites Coronil (1997) and Taussig (1997) in relation to the 'magic' of the state, through which states become accepted as 'real, powerful and all-pervasive elements of the world' (Nugent, 2010: 682). He also examines Corrigan and Sayer (1985), for whom state formation is achieved through a 'moral regulation' expressed in everyday routines, rituals and rulings. Nugent's point is that this focus is very much on the 'functioning' state, whereas his aim is to draw attention to those moments where states falter or fail. His effort is not to discredit earlier scholarship but to note that state formation is not always and everywhere accomplished and that there are limits to state effects. Building on Nugent's insight, I contend that the anthropology of the state, which has already generated so many useful insights, would benefit from an equally robust anthropology of anarchy. A study of anarchy would complement studies of the state by focusing on those instances where state formation not only falters and fails, as Nugent suggests, but also those instances where state formation is either not attempted, or is opposed, or is irrelevant. For, to mangle Pierre Clastres' words somewhat, if the state is everywhere, then it is nowhere.[4] While Clastres' work remains controversial, and this collection indeed contains a critique of it (Stephen Nugent), his point regarding the limits to the political deserves serious engagement. The state and state effects cannot be literally 'all-pervasive'. If we want to maintain an analytical clarity about what it is we mean by 'state', we need a concept of its limits, failings, and what falls beyond. Anarchy is a term that can name such a social relationship.

A first step, again taking a leaf from the anthropology of the state, may be to understand how anarchy, too, is banal, mundane, ordinary and everyday. There is

perhaps no better example of this kind of analysis than anarchist writer Colin Ward. Ward consistently argued that anarchy was to be found not in the future great revolution, but here and now in already existing practices. In an essay inspired by an ethnography of music in Milton Keynes (Finnegan, 2007), for example, Ward (1992) found evidence that musicians were not only capable of the kind of spontaneous, voluntary associations that Kropotkin suggested could lay the basis of an anarchic mode of (dis-)organization, but that they were already practising them in some of the most meaningful parts of their lives. Inspired by Ward, I will seek in this introduction to hold in mind that – as much as the state as a social relationship is manifest in everyday, mundane and banal practices – so too are anarchic relationships. These are amenable to the kind of ethnographic analysis at which anthropology has excelled. Perhaps by bringing studies of anarchy together with studies of the state and by treating both in a similar, ethnographic and critical manner, we can make anarchy a little more banal, a little less visceral and fear-invoking. This would complement efforts (Aretxega, 2003; Lea, 2008, this volume; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Stoler, 2002) to draw attention to the visceral and extraordinary aspects of the state.

In addition to being motivated by this conceptual interest, this collection is also motivated by the need to respond to recent developments both in ethnography and in the worlds ethnographers study: anarchy, if you like, may well be feared but it can no longer plausibly be ignored. As this article goes to press, a series of protests in Europe, the UK and the USA prompted by the responses to ongoing financial crisis are being described as exhibiting anarchist forms of mobilization and decision-making. The importance of such anarchist-inspired activism was already evident in 2009 when we were in the earliest stages of planning this project, with, for instance, the Greek riots of that year. Also in 2009, a small seismic event occurred in Southeast Asian studies with the publication of James C. Scott's latest book, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Southeast Asia* (2009). That year also saw the release of an ethnographic work that rocked Australian anthropology: Peter Sutton's *The Politics of Suffering: Indigenous Australia and the End of the Liberal Consensus* (2009). Each of these has a much longer history, and in many ways these events are difficult to compare: one is an increasingly prominent political trend associated mostly with America and Europe, another is a book published by an internationally acclaimed academic, and the third a book by an anthropologist little known outside his home country. The unlikely link between these three is, however, anarchy. The word meant significantly different things in each case. But the differences in these deployments are instructive. They tell us about the way the idea of anarchy is being used today, the hope and also the horror that is invested in it and the work it does in the world. They tell us, too, something about the relationship between anthropology and anarchy (both possible and actual) at this time. This collection contains commentaries that relate to each of these themes. I will consider each in turn as a means of introducing the articles that follow.

Anthropology of anarchism

A basic distinction to be made at the outset is between anarchy as a description of a situation or as a concept, and anarchism as a political movement. Some time ago, David Graeber (2004) perceptively highlighted the growing importance of anarchism as a form of political action. He argued that it should be possible to construct an anarchist anthropology linked to this political movement, just as one finds, for instance, Marxist anthropology or feminist anthropology. However, one could add that just as studies of the state have not necessarily been pro-state attempts to further the state's ends, studies of anarchy need not be anarchist attempts to further anarchist goals. Anarchist anthropology thus needs to be distinguished from an anthropology of anarchists. The first shares sympathies with anarchists and seeks to further anarchist aims by prospecting in anthropology, while the second seeks to understand anarchists through anthropological methods: these may be but are not necessarily linked.[5]

This collection contains two examples of the latter: both ethnographic accounts of anarchist persons. The first, by Felix Ringel, is a sensitive account of a dying East German town where some youths relate to each other, their town and the future through a self-consciously anarchist orientation. One of Ringel's key points is that these youths are anarchist through techniques of self-making: in the process they are incited into a constant process of criticism and self-reformulation that keeps their temporal orientation in the near future. Revolution, in this formulation, is of the self, and is ever-imminent. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's article also considers the enactment of an anarchist identity in his study of Maxim Kuchinski, a Russian anthropologist and anarchist. Ssorin-Chaikov examines Kushinski's understanding that power is a universal element of all human relations that must be countered or opposed, but is never absent. Ssorin-Chaikov notes the contrast of this vision of humanity with earlier anarchist approaches that instead took the *social* as the universal element: this was a paradigm shift from 'social' to 'power'. More than just a dry genealogy of ideas, this article, like Ringel's, makes its argument through the ethnography of political subjectivity. Ssorin-Chaikov draws attention, for instance, to 'anarchist power moves', the assertions of identity and recognition that are made in activist debates through certain kinds of intellectual positioning in the shifting terrain of anarchist discourses that are at once political and self-making, much like anthropology itself. Ssorin-Chaikov's article in particular lessens the apparent divide between anarchism and anthropology, not only through the device of examining an individual who identifies as both, but also by placing both anthropology and anarchism in a shared philosophical and historical frame.

In another approach to the question of how anarchists have studied anthropology, Robinson and Tormey (this volume), provide a fascinating document survey of contemporary anarchist texts, such as the journals *The Raven* and *A Journal of Desire Armed*, reading these for their deployment and depiction of anthropology. An anarchist activist and a political theorist respectively, Robinson and Tormey provide a perspective on anthropology that is twice removed: first, they read how

anthropology appears in activist texts, and second they do so as non-anthropologists themselves. As such, their article provides an intriguing text for reflecting on the life of anthropology outside the discipline. Robinson and Tormey suggest that anthropology has primarily been approached in contemporary anarchist activist writing as if it were a kind of 'bridge' between activists and imagined indigenous others. The approach is typically pragmatic, a kind of prospecting through the ethnographic record for those elements that were useful for a political platform without taking on most of the discipline's key preoccupations. Thus anthropological texts that aim to destabilize dominant western perceptions (such as the common use of Sahlins, 1972) have been popular among anarchist writers. Robinson and Tormey noted that after the reflexive turn this kind of anthropological exegesis waned, and contemporary anthropology has been much less employed by anarchist writers because it has been less easy to use as an example of significant, but bridgeable, cultural difference.

Anarchy in the hills of Southeast Asia

Perhaps anarchist writers will renew their interest in anthropology with the publication of James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Southeast Asia* (2009). I will examine this book now as my first example of how the idea of anarchy has recently impacted ethnography. While Scott depicts his book as a historical study, the focus is on people who have traditionally been studied by anthropologists – the tribal, upland and until recently 'stateless' peoples of mountainous mainland Asia – and he draws substantially on ethnographic texts. His argument is that these peoples, who have so often been depicted as barbarian, backward or wild, and as living remnants or residues of the past, are in fact refugees from lowland states. While states have attempted to depict them as savage because of their relative remoteness from the benefits of civilization, Scott inverts the argument to suggest that remote places have been havens for those fleeing the savageries of states (taxes, *corvée*, slavery and conscription). He asks us to interpret these people in terms of the positive choices they have made to evade states – choices that, in turn, informed their social structure, subsistence practices, language characteristics and so on.

The subtitle of Scott's book, of course, mentions anarchy. But who are the anarchists? Scott does not write explicitly about the European tradition of anarchist thought in this book, and nor does he make the claim that the uplanders he is concerned with are somehow anarchist in the sense of a Euro-American tradition of thought and subjectivity that Ringel, Ssorin-Chaikov and Robinson and Tormey consider so carefully in this special issue. Rather, in my reading, it is Scott who is the anarchist, not in terms of the theoretical tradition that he cites, but rather in the sensibility that he brings to his interpretation of the ethnographic record. And his anarchism is of a rather 'classical' kind. Reminiscent of Kropotkin, he takes a survey approach, leafing through the ethnographic record in a search for a common theme among the accounts of those people considered stateless, savage

and barbarian. Also, Scott takes as a central heuristic the contrast between state and non-state arrangements, and the desiring subject as having agency in choosing between these, this in contrast to 'post-anarchist' theorists such as Todd May (1994) who have drawn inspiration from post-structuralist theory to argue that classical anarchism replayed many of the assumptions of Enlightenment thought, including assumptions about the nature of power and that of the subject, and thus did not offer a truly radical alternative.

In his Kropotkin-esque survey approach, Scott is, as Hjorleifur Jonsson puts it in his contribution to this volume, prospecting in the ethnographic record. The term 'prospecting' is from Jonsson's article, but I take it up in this introduction as a lens for considering the relationship between anarchism and anthropology. I mean by it that practice of sifting through an intellectual field for jolts of inspiration, fresh perspectives or new lenses. During the gold rush days of the American West, 'prospecting' came to indicate the initial search for gold – often a superficial and/or experimental survey of large areas of land (often other people's land) in search of potentially rich veins of minerals. Prospecting might also involve working a site experimentally to test its richness. I will argue in this introduction that one of the recurrent themes in the relationship between anarchism and anthropology is the promise and pitfalls of mutual prospecting.

Scott's prospecting has raised concerns among those who work closely with the ethnographic record of Southeast Asia. Charles Keyes, for instance, reviewed the book sympathetically, but concluded that he 'cannot follow Scott to his conclusions' (2010: 241) because of concerns about the interpretation of key ethnographic facts. For instance, Keyes was concerned that Scott's use of the term 'state' to describe the various polities and powers of precolonial Southeast Asia runs counter to scholarship, pointing to a diversity of political formations. In this collection, Nugent raises similar concerns about Clastres' depiction of Amazonia (Scott acknowledges Clastres as a major influence). Nugent furthermore points out that anarchist readings of Clastres, that would paint the natives of Amazonia as anarchic and 'against the state', are remarkably consistent with the view held of natives by those who would obliterate them.

Jonsson is a scholar whose ethnographic work Scott has drawn on extensively and who he acknowledges as a major influence. At first, Jonsson was – like Keyes and others – concerned with the 'errors' in Scott's use of his work. But in his contribution to this collection he moves beyond this empirical wrangling to ask instead a larger question: can a book that does not make sense still make sense? He raises the possibility that Scott's book is not about Southeast Asia after all: it is a manifesto for new selves in the USA. It 'makes sense' to certain readers today that these people *must* have been trying to avoid the state, readers who are themselves already committed to self-styling as free, proud, rebellious, and always unique. Jonsson's critique is that this manifesto makes Southeast Asia a backdrop for projections of American, and perhaps European, fantasies about freedom that begin with the assumption that the state is evil and that end with (armchair) anarchism.

It is true both that Scott's book makes for compelling reading, and also that compulsions deserve critical reflection. My own reading of Scott's book was coloured by events that occurred in Australian anthropology in 2009. It is to these events, and my third example, that I now turn.

Anarchy in the Australian outback

Sutton's *Politics of Suffering* (2009) is a striking example of anthropological knowledge at work in the world: it speaks to and has in turn influenced contemporary Australian policy towards Aboriginal Australians. Perhaps because it has been so important in Australian policy, it has had almost no influence globally or on the discipline of anthropology more generally. The book grapples with no cutting edge debates: what theoretical argument there is in the book is limited (such as dated statements about the drawbacks of cultural relativism and a curiously anachronistic assertion that culture is that which you acquire in childhood). Yet, for all its apparent lack of sophistication, this book warrants attention because it is a good example of how anthropological knowledge has very real political effects and because these theoretical positions, while out of step with contemporary anthropology, do inform this political impact.

The book was well-received. It was awarded the John Button Prize in 2010 as the best commentary on Australian politics or public policy, a prize for which J.M. Coetzee, Nobel Laureate, was one of the judges. Anecdotally, reports abound of high-flying bureaucrats clutching and eagerly discussing their copies of Sutton's work. In this book, Aboriginal people are depicted as violent and disorderly, anarchic in the most chaotic and hellish sense of the word, and as *therefore needing* government intervention. Sutton made the argument that Aboriginal people today still have the characteristics of a nomadic, stateless people, and that, when placed in the context of modern, sedentary lives, this creates social pathologies such as violence, substance abuse and sexual abuse. He paints a picture that is simply horrific: remote Aboriginal settlements, he argues, are riddled with wanton violence against women, neglected and sexually molested children, and alarming declines in literacy, health and life expectancy. He calls remote Aboriginal settlements 'outback ghettos' (2009: 76). Although he does not use the word explicitly, the picture he paints is of 'anarchy' in the sense of chaos, a world spinning wildly out of control. Sutton argues that anthropologists have been complicit with this alarming decline because their commitment to relativism has meant that they have not been honest about the role Aboriginal culture plays in this malaise, preferring to point to colonialism and ongoing state mismanagement.[6] The solution he offers is government intervention: he called for this explicitly in 2000 (published as Sutton, 2001), and after the government undertook the military operation known as 'the Intervention' in 2007, his 2009 book applauded it.

Tess Lea, in her contribution to this volume, provides a comprehensive summary of the Intervention, so I will not rehearse this here, but it may be helpful for readers to know at this juncture a few of the features of the Intervention: welfare

payments were quarantined and could only be spent on certain items and in certain stores. This required in turn the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act. School attendance was linked to welfare payments: parents' payments would be suspended if children failed to attend. The government announced that compulsory health checks would be undertaken in an investigation into the prevalence of sexual abuse, but this was abandoned under pressure from health professionals and others. Programmes aimed at 'individually owned homes' were introduced, but quickly failed resulting in many being forced into public housing. The aim was to control violence and child abuse by a leveraging of welfare to force a 'mainstreaming' of Aboriginal people. This approach did not address perhaps the one most important factor: namely the incredible degree of overt violence, bureaucratic waste, inefficiency and substandard service provision that goes on when the recipients are Indigenous people. This is the topic of Lea's article in this collection.

Tess Lea is an anthropologist of bureaucrats working in the Northern Territory. Her article provides a counter-narrative to Sutton's depiction of chaos and decay among Aboriginal people. Instead, Lea begins from the question: why do bureaucrats find these images of Aboriginal suffering so absorbing, recognizable and electrifying? While Sutton's book may not convince many academically inclined anthropologists, it nonetheless found an eager audience outside the discipline. The narrative it presents slots into a larger logic: that anarchy reigns out there in the outback, and interventions of the kind that bureaucrats provide are urgently needed because they bring order. Lea argues such narratives provide bureaucrats with an emotionally compelling professional focus. Her ethnography of bureaucrats shows them as relieved by images of suffering during the intervention: relieved of their own professional boredom and creeping sense of fecklessness. The effective image was not any particular Aboriginal person's suffering, with all the complication and detail that would involve, but the generalized, culture-based image of suffering *en masse*. She goes on to point out that in fact the real anarchy was to be found among bureaucrats themselves. Their efforts were often chaotic, ending with on-the-ground incoherence, such as pipes connected to nothing, wheelchair access paths leading to a dirt ditch, and fortunes spent on faulty foundations laid for buildings never completed. In Lea's analysis, it is the state itself that is chaotic. It produces confusion, disorder and violent decay.

Lea's article suggests that the idea, so prevalent in Scott's and Sutton's work, that the state is an ordering, extensive, classifying, legible force that can deliver order to anarchy is only another element of the misrecognition of the state as it actually exists. Lea's use of the concept of anarchy to study the state points the way to a useful development in the anthropology of the state that can acknowledge the anarchist insight that there are limits to state relations. To take one prominent example of the implications of this line of thought, Mitchell has influentially suggested that the distinction between society and state is itself an effect of a larger overarching 'modern political order' (1991: 95). Taking anarchy seriously as a category for understanding existing arrangements suggests that there is no

reason to assume from the outset that there *is* a larger order: what if we thought instead about an overarching 'modern political disorder'?

Conclusion: The prospects

On the one hand, we have Scott's reading of Zomia as space of morally desirable refuge, freedom and resistance. On the other, we have Sutton's moral reading of remote Aboriginal Australia as violent, lawless and chaotic. If Scott's book is a romance, Sutton's is a horror story. These two works share something important: it lies in their reading of statelessness as a property of ethnographic others, and of the state as ordering: only the moral valuation of these differs, diametrically so. Anarchy, as I noted at the outset, seems to have the capacity to evoke high emotion: romance or horror, love or hate. This should sound a warning bell for those who would attribute anarchy in blanket terms to entire peoples, societies or geographic zones. Both Lea and Jonsson's contributions suggest that the attribution of anarchy to Aboriginals and to Southeast Asian uplanders respectively has been well-received – both Sutton's and Scott's books have avid readerships – partly because these are narratives that capture the reader's imagination through images of ethnographic others that tap into uncritically held fantasies.

   In this respect, the deployment of the ethnographic record here is like the mysterious alien technology discovered by Dr Morbius on a deserted planet in the classic 1956 sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet* (dir. Fred McLeod Wilcox). Dr Morbius, a philologist, is able to 'crack the code' of alien technology (doubling his intelligence in the process) and discovers how to create anything he desires. The parallels here with Scott and Sutton are striking: Whether the desire is to imagine stateless spaces of proud freedom, or to explain the violence and decline of some Aboriginal communities (and thus to justify intervention), the ethnographic record seems capable of generating powerful images to support particular political desires. But as Dr Morbius found, this miraculous technology does not only meet his conscious desires, but also his repressed ones. In the film, Dr Morbius' use of the alien technology generates 'invisible monsters from the Id', his own Id, that not only attack his enemies, but also the other members of his party and eventually his own beloved daughter. The 'monster' of the film turns out not to be an alien after all but part of himself. While the film's psychoanalytic pretensions are 'somewhat crude' (Tarratt, 1995: 331), it does provide a sufficiently dramatic illustration of the general psychoanalytic insistence on the mystery of our own desires, and the slipperiness of attempts at realizing them.[7] An approach that treats the ethnographic record as a mechanism for fulfilling political desire will always encounter this problem: which desire? And what would it mean to really realize it? This, perhaps, goes some way to explaining why – as both Jonsson and Nugent note in this collection, and as my comparison of Scott and Sutton shows – anarchist use of the anthropological literature in Southeast Asia and South America has striking parallels with authoritarian uses of it.

Some will no doubt find this line of argument provocative because it seems to undermine the possibility of political application of anthropology. This is not my intention. I have no in-principle opposition to 'activist' or 'public' anthropology, or other political engagements informed by anthropological perspectives. I do think, though, that awareness of the complexity of desire can contribute to the critical and honest self-reflection necessary to any such project. One of the (many) reasons I admire Scott's 2009 work is that he openly and unmistakably declares his politics in the subtitle of his book. Indeed, this is another reason for thinking through anarchism: it is a concept many find hard to remain neutral about, so it has the benefit of at least prompting explicit reflection on what may be submerged political commitments in our arguments about human nature, the state, the potentialities of human organization. My reference to psychoanalysis is intended to add to this impetus for critical self-reflections as a basis for political engagement.

While I have drawn attention to 'prospecting' in the ethnographic record by political activists, and while I have suggested that it is advisable to maintain a professional and critical interest in this prospecting, I do not mean by this to suggest that prospecting is an insult, a phrase that, like 'cherry-picking', can be used as a cheap criticism to be hurled at the non-specialist who dares to glance beyond their own furrow. To the contrary, we are all prospecting at least some of the time, and this can produce striking intellectual and/or political outcomes. The ethnographic method itself can be understood as a kind of prospecting, a deliberate and yet open-ended scouting out of often alien territories, looking for nuggets to be taken up and more intensively worked. And many anthropologists also now characterize themselves as eclectic theoreticians, deploying parts of theoretical insights developed in other fields without necessarily accepting the entire position from which these emerge. There has, perhaps, been more prospecting by anthropologists in the field of anarchist thought than has commonly been realized. This is the thesis put forward by Keir Martin in this collection. He tracks the development of gift theory in both anthropology and European anarchist thought and action. He notes that the history of 'the gift' cannot be interpreted merely as an anarchist 'use' of a pre-existing anthropological finding, and nor is it an intellectual appropriation of an activist social critique: the genealogies of thought are much more entangled than this. Anthropological thought can be read as contributing to the May events of 1968, while activism among the Situationists can be thought of as pre-empting much of the more recent anthropological rethinking of the gift. Martin's contribution is a salutary warning against over-drawing the apparent boundaries between activism and intellectual pursuits. Like Ssorin-Chaikov and a number of other contributors to this special issue, his interest is in placing both of these in a mutual historical framework.

By recognizing ourselves and others simultaneously as specialists and as prospectors I hope to cultivate a tolerance and also caution with regard to this practice when we see it, an awareness of the pitfalls, but also potentials, of an approach that takes us into the discomfiture of new grounds and delivers to our own turf unexpected guests. In the spirit of a critical mutual prospecting, there are grounds for

welcoming anarchist theorists who come to prospect in the ethnographic record. I suggest that they would find good pickings in the ethnographic record not of the primitive other, but in the insightful and growing field of the ethnography of the bureaucracy, finance, the modern nation state. It seems that much of the anthropological literature openly labelled 'anarchist' – such as Scott (2009) and Clastres (1977), as well as more obscure writers such as Barclay (1990, 1992) and those surveyed by Robinson and Tormey in this volume – have prospected in the anthropological literature precisely for those instances of anarchy 'out there' and 'back then', that is, in remote, isolated or archaic societies. Nugent and Jonsson both note in this collection that this use of the ethnographic record runs into a number of empirical and political problems. First, this kind of literature tends to draw out themes of commonality that are often hard to sustain in the face of detailed ethnographic data about the societies in question (such as variation in the nature of the state, change over time, and local conceptions of hierarchy). Second, the commonalities it finds (such as proud autonomy, resistance to incorporation, continuity with the past) are also the commonalities (one might even say cultural clichés) that are so often those also attributed to marginal people by those who would enclose them: Sutton's book is an excellent example of this overlap between anarchist and what we might call authoritarian writing. The search for anarchist inspiration in the anthropology of ethnographic others is thus fraught with empirical and political troubles that do not, I believe, further anarchist activists' goals. The anthropology of the state, by contrast, has provided a number of insights that could usefully further anarchist thought. The insight that states are not, after all, necessarily the ordering, controlling, organized organizations that they may put themselves out to be is a challenge both to those writers who would posit a sharp divide between state and non-state societies but also to much classical anarchist thought, which based its critique of the state on its successful ability to control, dominate and extract. Anthropologists have found that, rather than rendering processes and people legible, the state is just as often found operating through obfuscations and confusions (High, 2008, 2009). State formations can fail (Nugent, 2010). The state is peopled with bureaucrats, with all the passions, foibles and patchiness that this implies (Lea, 2008). These insights about the limits and failures of the state sit well with the kind of anarchism of Colin Ward, that insisted on looking for anarchism as lived in the here and now, in the holes and fissures of an incomplete state project, and perhaps, as Lea suggests in this volume, also in the incoherence and chaos of the state apparatus itself.

I will, then, conclude on a hopeful note: there is good prospecting to be had for anthropologists in the intellectual tradition of anarchism, and vice versa, if only because both anarchism and anthropology are both engaged in cultural critique. The questions of how people organize and on what grounds, hierarchical and non-hierarchical social relations, and how state interventions are framed, legitimated and resisted are enduring questions. It is because anarchy as a concept and as an intellectual tradition relates to these enduring questions directly and provocatively that it can prompt interesting questions for anthropological empirical investigation and reflection. Some anthropologists

and some anarchists alike have argued that the boundaries between state and wider sociality are blurred because the state, too, is a social relationship. What remains open for investigation is how both anarchic and state relationships manifest in various ways in our field sites. My sense is that we won't find purely anarchic relations 'out there' and 'back then' – in the hills and in the past as in Scott's depiction, or in the contemporary 'outback ghettos' and ancient Aboriginal past as Sutton would have it. And nor should we assume too quickly that 'the state' explains all ways of being in the world in those contexts where state relations are entrenched. Rather, my sense is that when we start exploring state and anarchic forms of social relationship together we will find both in uneven and patchy dispersal wherever we look. This will call attention to the manifestation, interaction, and alteration of these relationships as we observe them, not out there and back then, but here and now.

Notes

1. This special issue emerged from a workshop entitled 'A critical anthropology of anarchy' held at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, 22–3 September 2010. The workshop was supported by donations from *Critique of Anthropology* and the Department of Social Anthropology. Workshop participants developed and challenged my ideas; however the failings and idiosyncrasies in this article are my own. I presented an early version of this article to the Social Anthropology Research Associates seminar, Cambridge University in 2010 and to anthropologists at Université Libre de Bruxelles. Both forums gave me challenging feedback and generous encouragement.
2. It seems that this dualism of the word goes back to its roots in ancient Greek. Gordon (2006) notes that the most common use of '*anarkhia*' was to indicate disorder, rioting and mobs. However, two separate sources also identify the defiance of Antigone as anarchic, indicating a sense in which the word also implied a positively valued 'disobedience and direct action' (2006: 88).
3. Thus, when archaeologists go in search for the first states, it is often signs of social stratification between rulers and the ruled that they look for (see for example Liu, 2009).
4. The actual quotation is 'if political reality is found everywhere, it is found nowhere' (Clastres, 1977: 19). If this sentence is placed in context, one can understand the larger point he was trying to make:

> What is especially striking about this literature is the gradual dissolution of the political. Failing to find it where they expected, the authors believe they have located it at every level of archaic societies, with the result that everything falls within the bounds of the political. All the sub-groups and units (kinship groups, age groups, production units, and so forth) that make up a society are haphazardly endowed with a political significance which eventually covers the whole social sphere and consequently loses its specific character. For if political reality is found everywhere, it is found nowhere. (Clastres, 1977: 19)

5. The distinction is similar to that developed by Grillo and Stirrat (1997) when they distinguished 'development anthropology' from 'the anthropology of development', the former concerned with applying anthropological knowledge in development projects,

the latter concerned with applying anthropological analysis to the concept and discourses of development. While the authors recognized that these two forms could overlap, and that one anthropologist could practise both, they maintained that these were importantly distinct projects.

6. Hinkson (2010) suggests that Sutton's condemnation of anthropology as a discipline is closely linked to the demise of classicism as a dominant paradigm in Australianist anthropology. Classicism, based on the structural-functionalism of early British social anthropology, became increasingly untenable due to the salience of colonization, incorporation into the modern nation state, and the rise of interculturalist perspectives. Sutton's response to the end of classicism as a dominant paradigm appears to be to argue that without the 'high culture' of old, there is no culture worth studying or defending: structural-functionalism has become inverted into structural-dysfunction, and it is dysfunction that he focuses on.

7. This was a consistent theme of Freud's work. One very telling example is his analysis of 'Dora' (Freud, 1905). Dora complained of her father's affair with another woman, Dora's role in facilitating this affair, and the sexual advances from that woman's husband to Dora herself that subsequently took place while she was still a juvenile. Freud replied with the persistent view that, despite the others' flagrant misbehaviour, nonetheless the key to Dora's cure lay in the recognition of her own desires. In his relentless analysis, Freud suggested that Dora in part desired the sexual advances she received, and also had a homosexual desire for her father's mistress as well as a standard desire for her own father: her desires were multiple, at odds with one another, and not necessarily known to her. In revisionist critiques of this case, scholars have commented on Freud's lack of sensitivity to Dora's vulnerability, a critique which is thoroughly grounded in contemporary valuations about therapeutic practice, childhood and medical care. While this therapeutic style has not stood the test of time, Freud's insistence on the multiplicity and complexity of desire has. It inspired Lacan's insistence that 'one sees in one's partner what one props oneself up on, what one is propped up by narcissistically' (1999: 87). Deleuze (1987), in contrast, has passionately argued that Freud's concept of desire *was not multiple enough*. Working to expand desire beyond individual sexuality and the domestic realm towards an understanding of desire as assembled also from the political, economic and social, and indeed as constitutive of these.

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