



**POST-
ANARCHISM
A READER**

EDITED BY DUANE ROUSSELLE
AND SÜREYYA EVREN

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Post-Anarchism

Preface

Post-anarchism has been of considerable importance in the discussions of radical intellectuals across the globe in the last decade. In its most popular form, it demonstrates a desire to blend the most promising aspects of traditional anarchist theory (centrally, the attitude of hostility in the face of representation) with developments in post-structuralist and postmodern thought. However, since its inception, it has also posed a broader challenge to the reification of anarchist theory. It might be argued, as Lewis Call suggests in this book, that today ‘a kind of post-anarchist moment has arrived’; whether or not this moment marks the final becomings of a vanishing philosophical mediator whereby what used to be explicitly regarded as ‘post-anarchism’ has simply become ‘anarchism’ (post-anarchism without its defining critique against ‘traditional anarchism’) is a matter for future investigation. However, I remain convinced that post-anarchism is the radical contemporary equivalent of the traditional anarchist discourse which, without proper force and direction, remains as impotent or as strong as traditional anarchism ever has been. In this sense, I would suggest that post-anarchism is simply another word to describe a paradigm shift that erupted at the broader level of anarchist philosophy and which has yet to be fully developed on the streets.

Post-anarchism decentralizes the political movement, motions toward tactical rather than strategic action, brings anarchist thought into touch with a range of influences (in this sense post-anarchism reflects a ‘cultural studies’ approach) and provides the foundation for a thousand lines of flight; post-anarchism brings traditional anarchism into new relationships with the outside world. I believe that it is only those anarchists who speak within the broader trend of post-anarchism, a trend which is situated uniquely in the present context, who are capable of grappling with today’s issues. Today’s anarchists may not be post-structuralist but they surely embody the element of post-structuralism’s critique and the presumption of its focus in various ways. The book that you are holding aims to demonstrate this point.

The post-anarchists have been under attack. The brunt of this attack emerges from other anarchists who argue that the post-anarchists have too hastily declared a new tradition for themselves through highly selective and reductive readings of the traditional literature. This is the critique of the post-anarchist reduction of traditional anarchist literature. A second and emerging critique is that the post-anarchists have given up on the notion of ‘class’ and have retreated into obscure and intoxicating academic diatribes against a tradition built of discursive straw. In any case, it is without any question that post-anarchism has proved itself worth a second look: if one considers oneself a radical today, one will have to exercise extreme caution to avoid the force and influence of the post-anarchists. One need not be a post-anarchist

to appreciate what post-anarchism has to offer and the condition it seeks to explain; it is in this spirit of exploration and possibility that I offer, with Süreyya Evren, *Post-Anarchism: A Reader*. And for making these essays accessible to the wider public and to an anarchist-sympathetic readership, we make absolutely no apologies.

Our aim in this book is to offer readers the most comprehensive and up-to-date collection of post-anarchist material at an affordable price and in an accessible way in order to re-stimulate debates about its importance as a general movement of thought. My hope is that this book will help to resolve lingering tensions about the discourse through which post-anarchists are often accused of speaking (what Lacan has called the ‘discourse of the university’). Likewise, many anarchist academics are suspicious of the prefix ‘post-’. The range of perspectives brought together in this volume demonstrates that there is diversity within post-anarchism and that critics should be made aware of their own reduction of the ‘post-anarchist’ body of thought.

What will surely be regarded as an academic pursuit by practising anarchists, and what will no doubt be regarded as an anarchist pursuit by thinking academics, has ostensibly been resolved into a mutual rejection of sorts. Here, one should be careful to distinguish academic writing from academic patronage (writing from the academy should in all cases be distinguished from writing *for* the academy) – a conflation that is very often assumed rather than argued convincingly. My best advice is to take what one finds useful in the post-anarchist literature and to dispose of what one finds to be in the service of the ‘university’; here, we can only offer the tools and it is your job to build your own shelter.

Duane Rousselle

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Introduction

How New Anarchism Changed the World (of Opposition) after Seattle and Gave Birth to Post-Anarchism

Süreyya Evren

Anarchism is widely accepted as ‘the’ movement behind the main organizational principles of the radical social movements in the twenty-first century. The rise of the ‘anti-globalization’ movement has been linked to a general resurgence of anarchism. This movement was colourful, energetic, creative, effective and ‘new’. And credit for most of this creative energy went to anarchism (Graeber, 2002: 1). Anarchism appeared to be taking back its name as a political philosophy and movement from the connotations and metaphors of chaos and violence. The mainstream media strategy of focusing exclusively on the black bloc tactic, unfortunately, only reproduced these connotations¹, but it also helped to attract more attention toward the political thinkers and activists who understood what all this fuss was about. In turn, more scholarly and political works on anarchism and the new ‘movement’ emerged.

We generally use quotation marks when referring to the ‘anti-globalization movement’ because there is no one single author of the movement who would give it an official name; also, the activists and groups involved did not reach a consensus in naming the movement. It has been referred to as the Global Justice Movement, the Movement of Movements, the Movement, the Alter-Globalization Movement, the Radical Social Change Movement, Contemporary Radical Activism, the Anti-Capitalist Movement, the Anti-Corporate Movement, the Global Anti-Capitalist Protest Movement, the Counter-Globalization Movement, the Anti-Corporate-Globalization Movement, the Grassroots Globalization Movement. The discontent most of the activists felt with the term ‘anti-globalization’ was first of all grounded on the fact that it was coined by the ‘enemy’ (a ‘Wall Street term’ or a term coined by the corporate media) to label the activists as outmoded, blind, self-referential youngsters spitting against the wind (the unstoppable globalization) for no valid reason other than the joy of damaging property. And activists also objected to the term because they were not opposed to globalization per se (cf. Conway, 2003).

On the other hand, the left has historically found strategic value in the recuperation of pejorative labels. As Kropotkin points out, the term anarchism itself is a close example of this trend. Kropotkin was hearing critiques concerning the connotations of anarchy as, in common language, ‘disorder’ and ‘chaos’, and he was instructed that it was not a very wise idea to use the

term ‘anarchism’ for a political philosophy and movement (Kropotkin, n.d.: 1). In this short essay, which was first published in *Le revolte* on 1 October 1881, Kropotkin embraced the term ‘anarchy’. He made reference to the ‘beggars’ of Brabant who didn’t make up their own name (referring to the Dutch Sea beggars: Dutch rebels against the Spanish regime in the late sixteenth century) and the ‘Sans-culottes’ of 1793, referring to the French revolution:

It was the enemies of the popular revolution who coined this name; but it too summed up a whole idea – that of the rebellion of the people, dressed in rage, tired of poverty, opposed to all those royalists, the so-called patriots and Jacobins, the well-dressed and the smart, those who, despite their pompous speeches and the homage paid to them by bourgeois historians, were the real enemies of the people, profoundly despising them for their poverty, for their libertarian and egalitarian spirit, and for their revolutionary enthusiasm.

Borrowing the same spirit, here, we prefer to use the term ‘anti-globalization movement’. Still, we should keep in mind that the term is used in a way that implies a resentment of global capitalism or the global neo-liberalist agenda.

The relationship between anarchism and the anti-globalization movement has been mutual; on the one hand, anarchism was the defining orientation of prominent activist networks and it was the ‘principal point of reference for radical social change movements’ (Gordon, 2007: 29). Thus anarchism was providing the anti-globalization movement with organization principles that were tested well in advance. And on the other hand, the ‘anarchistic’ rise of anti-globalization, the popularity it gained and the major role it played in the first years of twenty-first-century radical politics, through an open embracing of anarchistic notions and the massive incorporation of anarchist activists within the wider movement, was ‘widely regarded as a sign of anarchism’s revival’ (Kinna, 2007: 67); as Gordon puts it, ‘the past ten years have seen the full-blown revival of anarchism, as a global social movement and coherent set of political discourses, on a scale and to levels of unity and diversity unseen since the 1930s’ (2007: 29). A tradition that has been ‘hitherto mostly dismissed’ required a respectful engagement with it (Graeber, 2002: 1). Simply put, the anti-globalization movement brought anarchism back to the table. In Todd May’s words: ‘Anarchism is back on the scene’ (May, 2009: 1).

The dominant position Marxism previously occupied as ‘the’ left political philosophy and movement was openly questioned and becoming unstable – indeed, Marxism was challenged by the anti-globalization movement beyond the confines of the variant employed within the USSR. Anarchism, as a form of political theory and practice, has been unseating Marxism to a large extent. There were forms of anarchist resistance and organization appearing everywhere in society: ‘from anti-capitalist social centres and eco-feminist communities to raucous street parties and blockades of international summits, anarchist forms of resistance and organizing have been at the heart of the “alternative globalization” movement’ (Gordon, 2007: 29). Anarchism was

‘the heart of the movement’, ‘its soul; the source of most of what [was] new and hopeful about it’ (Graeber, 2002: 1):

The model for the kind of political and social autonomy that the anti-capitalist movement aspires to is an anarchist one, and the soul of the anti-capitalist movement is anarchist; its non-authoritarian make-up, its disavowal of traditional parties of the left, and its commitment to direct action are firmly in the spirit of libertarian socialism. (Sheehan, 2003: 12)

So, at first, it was anarchists and the principles of traditional anarchism that served as the organizing principle of the new and emergent anti-globalization movement. In turn, the emergent movement served both as a global platform for testing anarchist principles in the new conditions of world politics, and as an Archimedes’ lever that largely displaced Marxism and brought anarchism to the attention of activists and academics worldwide, making anarchism recognized again.² It led to an ‘almost unparalleled opportunity to extend the influence of their (anarchists’) ideas’ (Kinna, 2005: 155); and at the level of theory, it not only gave rise to anarchist-influenced research but it also fostered a specifically ‘contemporary’ anarchist theory. It was a new opportunity for anarchists to rethink anarchistic social theory. We witnessed growing numbers of scholarly publications and events on anarchism (Purkis and Bowen, 2004; Cohn, 2006a; Moore and Sunshine, 2004; Day, 2005; Kissack, 2008; Anderson, 2005; Antliff, 2007).

But this empowered, updated ‘contemporary’ anarchism was not a reincarnation of nineteenth-century anarchism from the days of the First International or the 1934 Spanish anarchist revolution. Rather, this was something ‘new’: there was a consensus that this was an anarchism re-emerging – it was, certainly, ‘a kind of anarchism’. But which kind?

Soon after David Graeber’s article ‘The New Anarchists’ was published in one of the most prominent Marxist-oriented journals, *New Left Review*, the term had become widely accepted.³ For example, Sean Sheehan began his introductory book *Anarchism* (Sheehan, 2003) with a chapter titled ‘Global Anarchism: The New Anarchism’. A book which was supposed to cover anarchism as a political philosophy and movement began with detailed accounts of the ‘Battle of Seattle’, the legendary protest against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in November 1999 (Sheehan, 2003: 7–23). And of course, when the term was used among activist circles, it was not necessarily a reference to David Graeber’s use of it in his *New Left Review* article. The expression ‘new anarchists’ enjoyed a ‘wider usage within contemporary anarchist scenes’ (Gee, 2003: 3).

The main ‘newness’ of the ‘new anarchism’ was basically its spectrum of references. All the anarchistic principles employed were defined as a consequence of actual activist experiences. There was no intention to describe the movement as an application of an anarchist theory (which is itself a fundamental anarchistic attitude). For Graeber, the anti-globalization movement is

about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization are its ideology. It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy. (Graeber, 2002: 70)

Nevertheless, Uri Gordon offers an analysis of ‘present-day anarchist ideology from a movement-driven approach’ (Gordon, 2007: 29). It is no surprise that in the ideological core of contemporary anarchism⁴ he finds an ‘open-ended, experimental approach to revolutionary visions and strategies’ (Gordon, 2007: 29).

This open-endedness gave ‘new anarchism’ an additional elusiveness which later contributed to its rupture from ‘classical anarchism’. ‘Classical anarchism’ is another controversial term and it is positioned as a fixed ideology that is represented through the work of a select band of nineteenth-century anarchist writers; even these writers’ thoughts are reduced to certain clusters of ideas that only help to confirm prejudices about the ‘classical anarchists’. The discussions surrounding the ideas concerning the ‘new’ versus ‘classical’ anarchism were even understood as a part of the ‘conceptual and material evidence’ of ‘a paradigm shift within anarchism’ (Purkis and Bowen, 2004: 5).

In many cases, this was translated into a debate formulated as ‘post-’ versus ‘classical’ anarchism. Mostly, this contemporary need to reposition anarchism fostered all the new studies and discussions on post-anarchism. Post-anarchism was largely understood in the framework of ‘new’/‘post-’ versus ‘classical’ anarchism. There was a ‘close fit between’ the ‘new’ anarchism’s ‘system of coordination’ and the way ‘post-anarchism’ refers to post-structuralism ‘on how to build a left that embodies its own values’. ‘[A] left whose values are immanent is a left that thrives without authority and repression, and rids itself of both inward- and outward-directed resentment’ (Kang, 2005: 90). Part 2 of our book, ‘Post-Anarchism Hits the Streets’, explores ‘on the ground’ post-anarchist practice. Tadzio Mueller’s contribution is especially crucial here because it illustrates the problems and possibilities within the everyday politics of the movement. Richard Day’s contribution is exemplary in exploring the political logic of what he calls the ‘newest’ social movements and in discussing the largely declining role of the logic of hegemony for today’s (after the year 2000) activism. Jason Adams, a seminal figure in the short history of post-anarchism, takes the hegemony debate further in his chapter ‘The Constellation of Opposition’, and pinpoints Seattle (N30) as a decisive event in the development of contemporary practices of resistance.

Post-anarchism’s relationship to the anti-globalization movements is also confirmed by two of the most prominent writers associated with post-anarchism in the English-speaking world, Saul Newman and Todd May. During interviews conducted by the Turkish post-anarchist magazine *Siyahi*, both agreed that the ‘post-Seattle anti-globalization movements’ ‘absolutely’ and ‘certainly’ had parallel motives with post-structuralist anarchy/post-anarchism. May lists ‘similar ideas informing both movements’: ‘irreducible struggles,

local politics and alliances, an ethical orientation, a resistance to essentialist thinking'.⁵ Newman goes even further, and while emphasizing the parallel motives between the anti-globalization movement and post-anarchism, he draws upon his definition of post-anarchism:

Post-anarchism is a political logic that seeks to combine the egalitarian and emancipative aspects of classical anarchism, with an acknowledgement that radical political struggles today are contingent, pluralistic, open to different identities and perspectives, and are over different issues – not just economic ones. (Newman, 2004)

Here Newman defines post-anarchism as an attempt to combine insights from classical anarchism with new anarchist epistemologies. But on the other hand it is possible to argue that post-anarchism is actually an attempt to create the theoretical equivalent of the anti-globalization movements. The rise of debates on post-anarchism is directly linked to the post-Seattle spirit of the anti-globalization movements. Theoretical attempts to marry post-structuralism/postmodernism and anarchism in various ways were suddenly embraced by activist-oriented scholars worldwide. Not because similarities between certain aspects of classical anarchist thought and post-structuralist theories created excitement, but because post-structuralism was so related to the rhizomatic character of the new anarchism that is shaking the foundations of the globe. If its 'form of organization' was the real ideology of the new global movement, then it was extremely likely that scholars would begin to link the features of this ideology to post-structuralist theory, and thus understand the practices of the 'movement' as rooted in a post-structuralist perspective. However, the turning of post-anarchism into an 'ism' – a current among the family of various anarchisms – owes much to the web site and email list created by Jason Adams.

Adams started the email listserv as a Yahoo! Group on 9 October 2002. He made an informative web page dedicated to the subject on February of 2003 and then changed his email listserv service provider to the Spoon Collective. The tone of the email exchanges at that time reflected a certain youthful excitement.⁶ Adams himself was an activist-academician who had spent the entire year organizing the WTO protests in Seattle, where he was living at the time. He also played an important role by organizing the N30 International Day of Action Committee which set up the primary web site and international email listserv that was used to promote coordinated action against the WTO worldwide. The WTO protests were the real turning point for him; it was during this time that he began to move towards embracing 'post-anarchism'. In his essay 'Post-Anarchism in a Nutshell',⁷ he gave a short description of post-anarchism and outlined what it was all about and what constituted its theoretical lineage (Adams, 2003). Adams understands post-structuralism as a radically anti-authoritarian theory that emerged from the anarchistic movements of May 1968 and which developed over three decades, finally emerging in the form of an explicit body of thought: 'post-anarchism'. This

in turn informed and extended the theory and practice of one of its primary roots (traditional anarchism).

This positioning of post-structuralism is not as peripheral as it would first seem. Julian Bourg, for example, sees an ethical turn through the legacy of May 1968. Depicting May 1968 as the ‘implicit ethics of liberation’, he saw a continuity of ethical debates that began with May 1968 and continued into the 1970s with ‘French theory’ (Bourg, 2007: 7):

The ethics of liberation [...] emerged in those social spaces where class-based revolutionary – and even reformist – politics were judged insufficient. For example, the popular statement ‘the personal is political’ was in essence eminently ethical; 1968 itself implied an ethics, the ethics of liberation, with both critical and affirmative sides. (Ibid.: 6)

What Bourg calls ‘an ethics of liberation’ has always been the primary concern of anarchists in revolutionary/political action and theory. That’s why prefigurative politics have been one of the touchstones of anarchism. According to Bourg, the activists of May 1968 were arguing that freedom was not free enough, equality was not equitable enough and imagination was not imaginative enough (ibid.: 7). The connection suggested by Bourg is about the historical roots of ethical concerns within ‘French thought’ that goes back to the social movements and activism of May 1968. Bourg argues that Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* brought to the fore the ethical antinomian spirit of 1968 and concretized a broader cultural ambience of post-1968 antinomianism (ibid.: 106–7). When Bourg lists the values of the May 1968 movement, anyone familiar with anti-globalization movements, anarchism and French theory, would easily see parallels: ‘imagination, human interest, communication, conviviality, expression, enjoyment, freedom, spontaneity, solidarity, de-alienation, speaking out, dialogue, non-utility, utopia, dreams, fantasies, community, association, antiauthoritarianism, self-management, direct democracy, equality, self-representation, fraternity and self-defence’ (Bourg, 2007: 7).

Douglas Kellner also sees this connection as an obvious one:

Thus, in place of the revolutionary rupture in the historical continuum that 1968 had tried to produce, nascent postmodern theory in France postulated an epochal [...] break with modern politics and modernity, accompanied by models of new postmodern theory and politics. Hence, the postmodern turn in France in the 1970s is intimately connected to the experiences of May 1968. The passionate intensity and spirit of critique in many versions of French postmodern theory is a continuation of the spirit of 1968. [...] Indeed, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Virilio, Derrida, Castoriadis, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and other French theorists associated with postmodern theory were all participants in May 1968. They shared its revolutionary [...] and radical aspirations, and they attempted to develop new modes

of radical thought that carried on in a different historical conjuncture the radicalism of the 1960s. (Kellner, 2001: xviii)

Kellner's interpretation of the general flow of May 1968 in terms of 'postmodern theory', Bourg's emphasis on post-structuralist works as concretized forms of the spirit of 1968 and Adams' way of locating post-anarchism as post-structuralism finally coming back to its roots (i.e. the spirit of May 1968 found in contemporary anti-capitalist movements which are equally anti-authoritarian) show a fruitful 'family tree' for post-anarchism. Instead of taking post-structuralism as a separate body of thought apart from activism in general and specifically apart from anarchism as something that can be or should be rethought in combination with activism/anarchism, here in Adams' approach we see a historical tracing of post-structuralism following the contexts in which it was created. And he finally depicts post-structuralism as a continuation and theoretical equivalent of anarchistic activism since the 1960s.

Todd May wrote his *The Political Philosophy of the Poststructuralist Anarchism* in 1994, well before the Battle of Seattle – 'five days that shook the world', as the title of one collection has it (Cockburn and St. Clair, 2000). Andrew Koch's early article 'Poststructuralism and the Epistemological Basis of Anarchism' was also one of the first attempts at a scholarly marriage of post-structuralism and anarchism. Part 1 of our book, 'When Anarchism Met Post-Structuralism', is a collection of some of the main pieces which should be regarded as the first attempts to think anarchism together with post-structuralism; this phase of post-anarchism was concerned primarily with exploring the possibilities for a convergence. Koch's chapter and May's book were not embraced with great enthusiasm when they were first published; similarly, Hakim Bey's 'Post-Anarchism Anarchy' was not thought to be among this frame of thinking in the 1990s. They were, rather, discoveries of the post-anarchism that emerged after Seattle. One of the first scholarly attempts to formulate a 'post-anarchist' body of thought, in the mid 1990s, came from Saul Newman, who continued to work on the politics of post-anarchism, took part in debates, clarified and defended his own approach to post-anarchism quite extensively, and was therefore seen as the representative of a theoretically distinguished domain of political theory. Thus, his chapter, 'Post-Anarchism and Radical Politics Today', is an important formulation of this standpoint.

Nevertheless, this also made Newman a victim of rather harsh criticism from anarchist circles for undermining the fathers of anarchism. But it was Andrew Koch who ought to be held 'responsible' for starting the stream of post-anarchist reductions of the classical anarchist tradition. He argued that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anarchists' attacks on the state were based on a 'rational' representation of human nature (Koch, 1993: 328); this claim played an important role in categorizing classical anarchism as essentialist – anarchist responses to prominent post-anarchists of the English-speaking world frequently responded to this claim by demonstrating that there were different understandings of human nature in the traditional texts. However, Koch, with the help of the post-structuralist literature, was aiming to 'assist

in the construction of an epistemologically grounded defence of anarchism' (ibid.: 328): he argued that post-structuralism conveys a logic of opposition by demonstrating how political oppression is linked to the larger cultural processes of knowledge production and cultural representation. He thereby defended uniqueness and diversity, demonstrating that post-structuralism stands against any totalizing conception of being (ibid.: 348).

Koch was offering post-structuralism as a new opportunity, as a new toolbox, to reformulate the claims of anarchism in a way that would rescue it from its rational conceptualization of human nature. This 'good intention' was not appreciated by all anarchists though. Benjamin Franks, for example, pointed out that Newman's (actually it was Koch's as well) "salvaging" of anarchism was not only unnecessary but also potentially misleading', for it was based on a misrepresentation of anarchism (Franks, 2007: 135). It was commonly agreed that whilst seeking to correct the faulty epistemological and teleological bias of traditional theory, post-anarchists remained wedded to a conception of the anarchist past which was itself faulty (Antliff, 2007; Kinna, 2007; Cohn and Wilbur, 2003). Part 3 of our book, 'Classical Anarchism Reloaded', presents the most important examples of this criticism.

When the idea of a rupture from classical anarchism to a new anarchism/post-anarchism became one of the central issues in anarchist debates during the 2000s, George Crowder's book *Classical Anarchism* became popular again after a decade (Crowder, 1991). Crowder had evaluated classical anarchism from a liberal perspective and he used the term 'classical anarchism' to describe four prominent figures of anarchist thought: Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. We shall see that positioning anarchism as a political philosophy represented by a select few thinkers from the classical epoch, a trend started by Eltzbacher (1975), created many problems for post-anarchism theory later on.

In a review of Crowder's book *Classical Anarchism*, Sharif Gemie criticized this reductionism of anarchist theory (Gemie, 1993). Gemie argued that Crowder's selection of anarchist thinkers was suspect and he asked why Max Stirner was omitted, for example, when William Godwin was included.⁸ And, more remarkably, Gemie continued by asking why propagandists of greater importance, such as Jean Grave or even Octave Mirbeau, were not included (Gemie, 1993: 90). This leads to some key questions: Who (what) represents anarchism? What are the politics behind the history-writing processes regarding anarchism? Why is it that thinking of Mirbeau as one of the key classical anarchist figures is, even today, such a marginalized position to take?

As mentioned above, post-anarchism became a worldwide phenomenon in the 2000s. Saul Newman's work was translated into Turkish, Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese and Serbo-Croat. More importantly, new texts were written in various languages. We witnessed a growing interest in rereading anarchism through postmodern/post-structuralist lenses, namely through/with Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard, Derrida, Lacan, Nietzsche, Baudrillard and others. There was once again a problem of naming this current: Todd May's expression 'post-structuralist anarchism' depicted a marriage of post-structuralism and anarchism (May, 1994).