times having given the topic a visibility that it had previously lacked. The relevant analogues come from economic history: price history flourished with unprecedented levels of inflation in the 1920s, and demographic history with unprecedented levels of population growth in the 1960s. We should not forget that as early as the 1960s the mathematician-turned-science historian Derek de Solla Price had justified the need for 'scientometrics' on precisely those grounds, in the context of which he popularized the idea of 'Big science'. But Burke draws much less on this explicitly demographic precedent, with its image of 'massified' knowledge, than on the more fashionable notion of knowledge as being in constant circulation. While Foucault is the immediate source, Burke notes that Foucault's own source is the rash of '*recherches*' ('researches') that emerged around 1800, most notably the contrapuntal natural histories of Lamarck and Cuvier. In this context, 'research' means the gathering together of naturally centrifugal items – ideas, artefacts, specimens – into a unified whole all in one place: a book, an archive, a museum. Etymologically, 'research' is to 'to search again', suggesting that intellectual coherence results from identifying an overarching pattern, which is not the same as finding a universal law after the manner of Newtonian mechanics. In the former, the individual items of knowledge remain interesting in their own right by virtue of their role in some larger account of, say, evolutionary history; in the latter, the items matter simply as instances of an abstract principle, the truth of which is of ultimate concern.

Of course, encyclopaedias and libraries existed before modern times, but not in juxtaposition to the abstract conception of truth exemplified by mathematical physics, which until very recently has served as the gold standard of knowledge in virtually all fields of inquiry. Against the backdrop of this tension, many mediating practices arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially techniques for testing knowledge claims and authenticating items of knowledge, not to mention validating personal expertise. One must be true not only to one's place or self but also to principles to which everyone might be held accountable. Surprisingly, Burke does not avail himself of Theodore Porter's *Trust in numbers* (1996), which explores the relevance of this point to the legitimation of democratic institutions. Instead he focuses on the dialectic spawned by the tension with which we continue to struggle: on the one hand, improved transport has made it increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that people's knowledge bases overlap only partially; on the other, the quest for epistemic unity demands that people organize knowledge in roughly similar, or at least compatible, ways. The result has been an unprecedented increase in research and educational institutions alongside an equally unprecedented increase in the movement of people between them.

In keeping with his McLuhanesque subtext, however, Burke sees the triumph of computer-based information and communication technologies in the second half of the twentieth century as compelling a more efficient organization and management of this dialectic, one that in the long term may displace the global institutional authority of academia. As noted earlier, he appears sanguine at this prospect, much more impressed by the sheer scale of involvement and interactivity in Wikipedia than by the unrepresentativeness of its contributors vis-à-vis the run of humanity, let alone the run of experts. A telling detail is that when Burke points to the emergence of a 'fifth estate' in his conclusion, he means William Dutton's name for web-based knowledge providers rather than Sheila Jasanoff's name for scientists as policymakers. It is certainly refreshing to find someone as wise and learned as Peter Burke sharing an enthusiasm for the democratic potential for knowledge-based technologies that have only begun to alter the landscape of human relations. Only time will tell whether it proves predictive.

Black flame: the revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism. Counter-power volume 1

By Michael Schmidt and Lucien Van der Walt. Edinburgh and Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009. Pp. 500. Paperback £18.00/US$22.50, ISBN 978-1-9048-5916-1.

Anarchism and syndicalism in the colonial and postcolonial world, 1870–1940: the praxis of national liberation, internationalism, and social revolution

By Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt. Amsterdam: Brill Press, 2010. Pp. lxxiv+434. Hardback €109/ US$155, ISBN 978-9004188495.

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In 1919 Tom Barker landed on the Valparaiso waterfront after being deported from Australia for

his leading role in the opposition of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to the First World War. More popularly known as the Wobblies, the IWW had, as Barker was to find, a significant presence in the Chilean port. The Chilean government deported him again to Argentina for collaborating with local IWW activists in organizing dockworkers. In Argentina there was similarly a strong tradition of anarcho-syndicalist unions among waterfront workers and Barker became active in organizing Marine Transport Workers (MTW) branches in Buenos Aires and Rosario. There he worked with Julius Muhlberg, an Estonian comrade he had known in Sydney, and for this involvement with the MTW was deported once more.[3]

Such trans-local circulations of (anarcho-) syndicalist political cultures and activism have been profoundly marginalized by nation-centred histories of the Left, and obscured by constructions of anarchists as atavistic 'primitive rebels' by influential historians such as Eric Hobsbawm. This marginalization has isolated anarchism from intersections with different leftist traditions and downplayed the role of anarchist and syndicalist activists in shaping political cultures of the Left in diverse geographical contexts. These political and historiographical tendencies have mitigated against serious scholarly engagement with anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism. The project of both *Black flame* and *Anarchism and syndicalism in the colonial and postcolonial worlds* is to redress fundamentally this position. Through doing so they make a major contribution to asserting the global significance of anarchism and syndicalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and stimulate a significant revision of existing understandings of leftist political cultures in this period.

Black flame, the first of two volumes by Schmidt and van der Valt in their *Counter-power* series, offers an attempt to rethink the broad anarchist tradition as a 'form of revolutionary and libertarian socialism that arises within the First International' (*Black flame*, p. 8). The text outlines a 'broad anarchist tradition' inaugurated by disputes within the First International, which rests on the exclusion of certain figures who have often been seen as central to the anarchist tradition such as Proudhon and Tolstoy. Drawing on innovative readings of central figures such as Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, Schmidt and van der Valt argue against a counter-position of 'anarcho-communism' and 'anarcho-syndicalism' and develop a coherent account of anarchism from this position. The book synthesizes a huge range of literature that positions anarchism as a global presence in opposition to accounts that position anarchism as having a more limited geographical range – notably those that construct Spain as an exceptional case. This is a very significant and valuable achievement.

The intellectual project of *Anarchism and syndicalism* is related to that of *Black flame*, as might be expected given that van der Walt is one of the editors. The book seeks to 'understand how anarchism and syndicalism developed as *transnational* movements' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through doing so, the editors seek to 'transcend Eurocentric narratives', obviating the 'frequent tendency to view movements in the colonial and postcolonial world as mere imitations or extensions of European movements' (p. xxxii, emphasis in original). The collection makes a major contribution through engagements with work on Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Peru), South Africa, Egypt, Ireland, Ukraine, China, Korea, and the Caribbean/Mexico/the southern US. The chapters develop a powerful sense of anarchism and syndicalism as global political forces, and on the whole this results in a very tightly edited and argued collection defined by excellent, committed scholarship.

Read together, *Black flame* and *Anarchism and syndicalism* make one of their most important contributions in asserting a global history of anarchism and syndicalism. While this is not necessarily articulated as a key aim of *Black flame*, it is one of its central arguments and something that sets it apart from other writings on the anarchist tradition. Meanwhile, the essays in *Anarchism and syndicalism* give a vivid sense of some of the connections through which anarchism has travelled. Dongyoun Hwang's contribution, for example, traces Kropotkin's influence among Korean anarchists, which was brokered by the role of Chinese students in Paris and Tokyo (*Anarchism and syndicalism*, p. 103). Hwang gives a fascinating sense of the generative trans-local political cultures of anarchism and breaks new ground through his exploration of the transnational reach of Kropotkin's work and influence. Anthony Gorman's chapter explores the role of Italian migrants in Egypt in fostering anarchist movements, asserting a strong sense of how diverse forms of subaltern cosmopolitanism shaped the form and circulation of anarchist politics.

3 See T. Barker, *Tom Barker and the IWW*, recorded, edited, and with an introduction by E. C. Fry, Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1965.

These connections raise important questions about how to theorize and understand these trans-local circuits and how to interrogate the intersections of anarchism with other political projects and traditions of the Left. A key tension here is the way in which anarchism is positioned by Schmidt and van der Walt as essentially a 'Western' political tradition that diffuses out to different geographical and political contexts. Thus they contend that, 'as modernity spread around the globe from the northern Atlantic region, the preconditions for anarchism spread too. By the time of Bakunin, the Alliance and the First International, the conditions were ripe for anarchism in parts of Europe, the Americas and Africa; within thirty years, the modernization of Asia had opened another continent' (*Black flame*, p. 72). I think it is more useful to see anarchism as intersecting with diverse political trajectories in different geographical contexts. Maia Ramnath's location of 'the Western anarchist tradition as one contextually specific manifestation among a larger – indeed global – tradition of antiauthoritarian, egalitarian thought/praxis', for example, is arguably more open to the productive exchanges between anarchist and other liberationist forms of political movement.[4] I would have liked to have seen more space given to these kinds of intersections, such as those hinted at in the discussion of the Nicaraguan revolutionary Augusto Sandino (*Black flame*, pp. 277–8).

A major contribution of *Black flame* is to contend, against dominant accounts, that syndicalism should be viewed primarily as a constituent part of the anarchist political tradition, not treated autonomously. Thus Schmidt and van der Valt usefully assert that care 'should be taken not to set up an artificial divide between syndicalist unions and the larger anarchist movements of which they formed an integral part' (*Black flame*, p. 193). They also make a strong case for disabusing those who view Georges Sorel as a leading theorist of syndicalism, persuasively arguing that Sorel was as much a commentator on syndicalism as an active participant (*ibid.*, p. 150).

This position represents a significant and creative challenge to dominant accounts of the relations between syndicalism and anarchism. What I feel it misses is a sense of the political malleability of syndicalism. By positioning syndicalism as unambiguously part of the anarchist tradition, Schmidt and van der Valt risk closing down a focus on the multiple political formations constructed through syndicalist political activity. Their discussion of the IWW, for example, usefully critiques the methodological nationalism and exceptionalism that has characterized much of the literature on that organization in the United States. Nonetheless, it would have been useful to have been more alive to the heterogeneous political influences brought together through the IWW. This account of syndicalism as primarily part of the broad anarchist tradition also fails to explain the intense struggles within the IWW over affiliation with the Communist International in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution. It further ignores the appeal of communism to hitherto committed syndicalists such as George Hardy.[5] Some of the contributions to the *Anarchism and syndicalism* collection interrogate this malleability. Emmet O'Connor's fine chapter on syndicalism in Ireland gives a strong sense of the co-articulation of syndicalism and Irish nationalist movements, examining, for example, the specific interrelations of personality cult, morality, politics, and nationalism that shaped Larkinism, the syndicalist movement associated with James Larkin, who led the Dublin lockout in 1913.

The nation and nationalism are not, however, treated as given here. One of the key contributions of these books is to de-centre the role of nationalism in struggles for national liberation. In his fascinating chapter on South African socialism, which signals the existence of important (and much neglected) anarchist and syndicalist movements in South Africa that were multiracial in composition and internationalist in outlook, van der Valt argues that there is a need to de-couple understandings of national liberation from nationalism (*Anarchism and syndicalism*, p. 89). This allows a focus on diverse articulations of anti-colonialism that were not necessarily constrained by nationalist imaginaries but offered different possibilities. This usefully problematizes the relations between internationalism and national projects, which are often thought about in rather straightforward ways.

Kirk Shaffer's chapter on anarchism in the circum-Caribbean focuses on the distinctive political strategies articulated by Cuban anarchists in the early twentieth century in relation to independence struggles. He argues that they sought 'to offer their own agenda for what an independent and internationalist Cuba should

4 M. Ramnath, *Decolonizing anarchism: an anti-authoritarian history of India's liberation struggle*, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011, p. 6.

5 G. Hardy, *Those stormy years: memories of the fight for freedom on five continents*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956.

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look like' in the wake of US occupation, articulating a distinctive vision of Cuban independence, and that they intervened in forms of anarchist internationalism (*Anarchism and syndicalism*, pp. 278–9). Their project was not to destroy 'local and regional autonomy' in the name of an outside notion of 'internationalism'; rather they sought to 'Cubanize' international anarchism, that is, to 'blend internationalism and nationality' (*ibid*.). This was a motley, cosmopolitan movement 'made of men and women, old and young, black and white, Cuban- and foreign-born, skilled and unskilled workers, poets, shopkeepers, playwrights and librarians' (*ibid*.). Shaffer's chapter is one of the most successful in giving a sense of the dynamic trajectories of anarchist organizing. Through tracing the circulation of anarchist literatures and political activists between the southern United States, Mexico, and Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean, he draws out a vibrant sense of the trans-local character of anarchism in this period and how it shifted in dynamic ways between different contexts. This is in marked contrast to the rather constrained approaches in some of the more geographically limited national case studies.

By asserting and interrogating the global presence of anarchism and syndicalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these works make a major contribution to refiguring understandings of political cultures of the Left. They present powerful challenges to existing accounts of leftist internationalisms and assert the importance of diverse forms of political agency and activity constituted through trans-local anarchist organizing.