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## Anarchism, Utopianism and Hospitality: The Work of René Schérer.

“Our task, our combat, is to preserve what is still left of the world's seduction or to know how to revive it. One should add, in pure immanence, along the surface, far removed from any claim to superiority or unfathomable profundity, as the occasion presents itself, whilst roaming. To promote the *anarchism* of seduction, or, better still, of seductions, as its mode of existence is that of multiplicities”.

Schérer *Anarchist Foods: Exploded Anarchism* (2008)<sup>1</sup>.

“Nowadays one cannot conceive a *utopia* that does not address itself to nomads, peoples and individuals, to the homeless, to the excluded”.

Schérer *Nomadic Utopias* (2009).

“Become who you are” [Nietzsche]. Escape from your identifications that are merely titles thrown upon you, mere categorisations in a social classificatory system. You are not that number, that façade, that petrified language. Become who you are. Allow forces to pass through you, open your doors to them. What you are is not inside you. It is the capacity to become other, to receive that which is other than you.

Schérer *Hospitable Zeus: In Praise of Hospitality* (1993).

René Schérer (born 1922) is lamentably almost unknown to the Anglo-American world as his work has, as yet, not been translated<sup>2</sup>. He is one of the main specialists of the French “utopian socialist”, Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and a major thinker in his own right. He is the author of more than twenty books and co-editor of the journal *Chimères*. Colleague and friend at Vincennes university (Paris 8) of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Rancière, Jean-François Lyotard, François Châtelet... , he continues to host seminars at Paris 8 (now located at St. Denis). He is a living testimony to a radical past, and a continuing inspiration to a new generation of young thinkers. This article aims to convey the original specificity of his understanding of anarchism. By so doing, it will stress the importance of his work for any thinking concerned with a politicised resistance to social conformity and the supposed “state of things” today.



Image 1: René Schérer.

The distinctive contribution that Schérer makes to our understanding of what anarchism is, or could be, is his insistence on its being combined with Utopianism and Hospitality. Indeed, a Schérierian theory and practice would be the embodiment of, what could be called, anarcho-utopian hospitality. This stance goes hand-in-hand with a far-reaching interrogation of who «we» are in relation to « others ». Schérer calls upon us to resist any notion of identity that wishes itself securely located in an homogeneous core or body (*corps*). He therefore rejects any form of identitarian politics.

The most evident source for understanding Schérer's idea of anarchism is his *Anarchist Food: Exploded Anarchism (Nourritures anarchistes: l'anarchisme explosé 2008)*. The title can largely be explained by referring to the work of Antonin Artaud, in particular to his "To Have Done with the Judgement of God"<sup>3</sup>. In the Introduction (or "Starters" as the book is divided into courses like a gastronomical feast), Schérer quotes Artaud's affirmation of potentiality of the body:

the need to abolish the idea,  
the idea and its myth,  
and to enthrone in its place  
the thundering manifestation  
of this explosive necessity:  
to dilate the body of my internal night,

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3 the internal nothingness  
4 of my self  
5 which is night,  
6 nothingness,  
7 thoughtlessness,  
8 but which is explosive affirmation  
9 that there is  
10 something  
11 to make room for:  
12 my body.  
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19 (Artaud in Schérer 2008a, 21).

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21 This “explosive affirmation” of corporeality is neither in the name of its misrecognized  
22 “goodness”, nor necessarily in the name of due “rights”. Indeed, Schérer seeks to destabilise  
23 out presumptuous tendency to legislate in accordance with notions of morality<sup>4</sup>. He is  
24 concerned with exposing “our moralizing mania, our obsession with security, which is forever  
25 driving us to name and detect some new crime against which we then concoct new  
26 legislation” (Schérer 2008a, 19). The “body”- which is not perceived as one “thing”, as one  
27 organized “entity”- should remain rebellious to such codification and classification.  
28 Corporealised resistance is a major feature of Schérer’s anarchism.

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36 In *Anarchist Food...* the “outlawed”, “micropolitical” topic of homosexuality is addressed<sup>5</sup>.  
37 “Micropolitics” refers to those desires that are conventionally relegated to the “domestic” or  
38 “private” and that demand expression, but not with the aim of being assimilated or in any way  
39 normalized within a conventional system (Schérer 2008a, 81). Schérer opens his series of  
40 essays by proposing an “anarchist method” (ibid 20). Here he cites with approval François  
41 Châtelet’s definition of anarchy as it appears in the collection *The Revolution Without Model*:  
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43 anarchy is not the absence of organisation, it is the absence of transcendence. It is the  
44 refusal to impose, in whatever form, a principle of functioning that precedes the real.  
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46 The idea of interiority is transcendence *par excellence*.  
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48 (Châtelet cited by Schérer ibid 20-21).

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52 Hence an anarchist “method” is a rebellious breaking away from the governing authority of  
53 laws and norms which explains its always more or less “criminal” – or “outlawed”-status (ibid  
54 20). An integral aspect of this refusal of conceptual predetermination is the rejection of a  
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3 supposedly controlling, centralised “subjectivity”, of a presumed core “interiority that always  
4 lays claim to a transcendence that functions as an ultimate refuge” (ibid).  
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8 As we will see in this article, this venturing outside the classical “refuge of subjectivity” is for  
9 Schérer paramount to entering an “anarchist utopia”. Utopianism is indissociable from the  
10 name of René Schérer. Often used in derogatory fashion to indicate unrealistic “castles in the  
11 sky” that are disconnected from the real world, the term “utopian” is positively charged for  
12 Schérer. One of his major sources for his sense of the potentiality of utopian thought is, again,  
13 Charles Fourier. According to Fourier, social change cannot be brought about by appealing to  
14 an abstract, disembodied notion of reason that all humans are supposed to have in common.  
15 Indeed, the focus on what makes supposed « reasonable » sense thwarts qualitative social  
16 change as those very mechanisms, the passions, that exist to combine us into social harmony,  
17 are stultified. A creatively dynamic social whole is produced, *not in spite of* the passions, *but*  
18 in a finely tuned concert *with* them as long as they are expansively developed in what he calls  
19 a “progressive series” (Fourier 2006, 15). Indeed, Fourier flouts “civilized” society’s logical  
20 certainties when he claims that whereas one cannot associate three families, one can easily  
21 associate three hundred (2001a, 266). His advocates that more numerous the passions are, the  
22 more easily will they harmonize with each other (Fourier 2008, 13). Social harmony cannot  
23 arise from a commonality of stock characteristics that “we” are all supposed to share. Instead  
24 it emerges from the proliferation of intensely *divergent* passions through which the individual  
25 unit, itself an artificial and egotistical construct of a brutalizing world of commercial  
26 speculation and social exploitation, is refracted as if through a prism. Nature, including  
27 humans, was originally no monoculture (Fourier 2001b : 113). Like other, more natural forms,  
28 we too thrive in profusion. The colorful, multifaceted embodied personality that is able to *re-*  
29 emerge in Fourier’s radical social experiment in the phalansteries is predisposed to, and can  
30 “intermesh with” [*engrener*], a range of people with and against whom they can nurture their  
31 diverse, sometimes bizarre and hybrid tastes, interests, and predilections.  
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49 A Fourierist society is multi-headed and gregarious. As we have seen, it is not controlled by  
50 any transcendent authority. Schérer purports that it would be a society that knows neither  
51 courts nor judgments, only passions and attractions, and whose aim is to « multiply social  
52 relations » (Schérer 2008a, 57). In Schérer’s *Pour un nouvel anarchisme* anarchy, which is  
53 « utopian » –inasmuch as it is a necessarily ongoing quest for a “stateless society”- is  
54 presented as a “playspace” [*espace de jeu*] (Schérer 2008b, 30)<sup>6</sup>. Anarchy is a “lubricating  
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3 oil” that relaxes and opens up the “mechanisms of power” [*dispositifs de pouvoir*] thereby  
4 permitting new possibilities to emerge (ibid). In other words, anarchism is a  
5 resistant/irresistible “political paradigm” and a powerfully “immanent critique” that has the  
6 potential to expose the closed “rigidity of political principles to the test of praxis” (ibid 31).  
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8 As such anarchism shares the same spaces as utopian theory and practice: utopianism is “a  
9 topos of the impossible that has become a necessity for thought and action” especially in  
10 “times of catastrophes, blockages and despair”.

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16 For Schérer today’s society is characterized by “securitarian politics and a withdrawal into an  
17 individualistic opportunism” [*un repli sur l’arrivisme individuel*] (Schérer 2014, 113). Desires  
18 have been commodified, i.e. manufactured and standardized, therefore those very dynamic  
19 forces that could be mobilized to bring about alternative ways of living have been deactivated.  
20 Utopianism enables them to restore their “passional movement” [*le mouvement passionnel*] by  
21 enjoining us to “encounter the impossible” or rather, what is conventionally perceived as  
22 impossible but which might well be laterally possible (ibid 108 & 115)<sup>7</sup>.

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29 Utopianism speaks from another space, far beyond the confines of what is deemed to be the  
30 “status quo”, things as they supposedly “are”. Likewise Schérer pushes the boundaries. His  
31 thinking and doing engages with liminality, with what happens at the margins. Unimpressed  
32 by the presumptuousness (*l’outréissance*) of power [*pouvoir*] that makes such great claims  
33 for its central importance, he affirms the creative potentiality of multifarious *puissances*<sup>8</sup>. In  
34 *Hospitalités* (2004), *la puissance* or *potentia* is affirmed as that which is proper [*propre*,  
35 *eigen*, *peculiar*] to humans. The “proper” is not understood as an intrinsic property of humans,  
36 but rather as our capacity to be carried outside of ourselves, beyond our own limits and to be  
37 transformed by our “passionate attractions” and encounters. Schérer reiterates that “the  
38 appropriation of what is one’s own is to be found only in the hospitable confrontation and  
39 dialogue with the foreigner/stranger” (Schérer 2004, 24)<sup>9</sup>. This “appropriation” is an  
40 affirmation of who we are (becoming)<sup>10</sup>, it is also a letting go of presumptuous claims to an  
41 “identity”, and a refusal to conform to reactionary identitarian categorisations: Schérer makes  
42 it clear how this philosophical position necessarily leads to a vision of a better world,  
43 animated by a different form of politics, in the following passage:

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Hospitality is not so much a fact as a way to behave or an ethics, or even an irreality to  
be brought into being, or a utopia.

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3 In short hospitality consists essentially *in the relation to the other* that it introduces. To  
4 receive, to welcome, to recognise in the other one's likeness [*semblable*] and, what is  
5 more, to appreciate his presence, his contact, as a contribution and an enrichment, not  
6 as an irritation. To move away from a conception of the world that valorises “the  
7 same”, the “identical”, to the detriment of everything that is foreign, towards a  
8 philosophy that attaches great value to the other, to the respect of differences (Schérer  
9 2004, 2-3).  
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11 Schérer's thinking and praxis makes a consistent stand against the all too frequent  
12 representation of the foreigner/stranger as a problem to be dealt with. That which is foreign  
13 and strange in all its various guises becomes a positive source of value and meaning<sup>11</sup>. In turn  
14 this estranging becomes constitutive of one's ever changing, multiple identities. In generously  
15 receiving the other, the host [*l'hôte*] also becomes a guest [*l'hôte*]. The praxis of hospitality  
16 can transform our relation to the particular space we occupy on this spherical planet: we are  
17 no longer able to lay claim to specific patches of the land's surface as our “private property”,  
18 removed for generations, if not forever, from communal circulation<sup>12</sup>. Instead our particular  
19 location can only be conceived as having been lent to us as a temporary possession, like a  
20 hotel/hostel frequented at various times by different visitors.  
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Image 2: Joseph Cornell Untitled « Hôtel du Nord » ca. 1954 ©ADAGP Paris 2013<sup>13</sup>.

Hotels/hostels provide accommodation for those away from home, or who have no home. They can also pry beings from their habitual points of orientation, from a notion of home turf, reinscribing the passer-through within a cosmopolitical “deterritorialisation”, one that can be barockly rich in meaning. They can be sites for an encounter with the other; alterity taps into the exuberant surplus of being. However, “hospitality”, as a utopian practice, largely exceeds the forms that already exist in the world today, especially as exemplified by commercialised hotellery and as codified by restrictive immigration laws. Hospitality is therefore only partially contained within active cultural coda and controlled by dominant political rules and regulations. It also necessarily works at the edges, flouting the formatted tastes of commodified “hospitality” and transgressing the limits imposed by juridicially policed hospitality. Indeed, living in an expansively hospitable way with others might well involve us taking risks, by making it our duty, as well as our pleasure, to in effect infringe restrictive and discriminatory laws that, e.g. forbid us as citizens from offering refuge to illegal immigrants.<sup>14</sup> Hospitality can therefore be equated, not only with a dynamic process of interaction, but also with a boldly tendencious, hyberbolic demand to expose ourselves ever more to what is



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3 ideologically demarcated as being “other” and as belonging “outside”; it can thereby reveal,  
4 and even rebelliously expose, the defensive and miserly fault-lines of the laws of the land.  
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8 Schérer draws on the work of Immanuel Kant, as well as Proudhon, for his sense of  
9 hospitality’s political potency (Schérer 2005 e.g. 53-114). In his utopian text, “Perpetual  
10 Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”, Kant had presented hospitality as the very basis of the  
11 cosmopolitan law of the future. Hospitality, a regulative idea for our future praxis, was  
12 generated from the physico-geographical fact of the earth’s sphericity. Kant had established  
13 the primordially communal possession of the earth’s surface [*des Rechts des*  
14 *gemeinschaftlichen Besitzes der Oberfläche der Erde*] (Kant 1994, 106ff). This ‘right to the  
15 earth’s surface’ arises by virtue of the planet’s globality”, the fact that it is a sphere  
16 [*Kugelfläche*], which pre-empts an infinite dispersal of human beings. Earth dwellers are  
17 therefore ultimately obliged to find means of getting on with each other, solicited by nature to  
18 cultivate the civilising arts of hospitality (Schérer 1993, 65-6). There is no alternative to, no  
19 escape from, our duties and rights towards others as there would be with an endless, flat  
20 surface. Kant had also reminded us that originally, before the springing up of states and  
21 countries, no-one had any more right of possession to patches of the earth’s surface than  
22 anyone else: the right to hospitality draws on this natural law as well. Schérer draws our  
23 attention to how, for Kant, a theory always has a “practical implications” [*une incidence*  
24 *pratique*], and how theoretical, even hypothetical, formulations of right are, like moral laws,  
25 injunctions *for action* that contravene the empirical short-term predictions of pragmatism and  
26 that reject the supposed certitudes of dogmatic politics (ibid). Therefore Kant’s focus on an  
27 originarily grounded universal hospitality [*Gastfreundlichkeit*], that generates rights, signals  
28 to a militant form of “utopian” politics, one that does not settle down within pre-existing  
29 institutionalised limits but which works at the limits for change and for the materialisation of  
30 what is ruled out as impossible (e.g. zero immigration laws). Schérer reinforces this voice of  
31 Kant, telling us we must bet on what is “impossible”<sup>15</sup>. In this valorisation of what is usually  
32 dismissed he solicits the support of Fourier who castigated those unimaginative, reactionary  
33 defenders of the status quo in the following manner:  
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51 The impossible is the shield of the philosophers, the fortress of the poor of spirit and  
52 the weak of heart. Once armoured with the word Impossibility, they use it to rule out  
53 all new ideas (Fourier cited in Schérer 1989, 4).  
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56 For Schérer, Kant is a philosopher who does not wield the “impossible” as a way of restricting  
57 what is morally justified and (cosmo)politically desirable<sup>16</sup>.  
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Indeed, in “On the Common Saying: “This may be true in theory but it does not apply in practice”, Kant precisely rebukes cynics who refuse to entertain alternatives to the supposed *status quo* because of lack of empirical proof that things can possibly be changed. Kant states that often projects “which are founded only on hope” are rejected from the start just because they do not as yet exist in world. This fatalistic doom would have precluded inventions such as “aerostatic balloons” (Kant 1994, 89). However, he considers that such short-sighted objections, which aim to ground “utopian” projects before they are given a chance to take off, ultimately do not carry any weight. He adds that their irrelevance is especially evident when it comes to moral aims “which, so long as it not demonstrably impossible to fulfil them, amount to duties” (Kant 1994, 89). Kant laments the “sententious, inactive times” [*spruchreichen und tattleeren Zeiten*] in which he lived. By demonstrating that theory can be put into practice, that we “should assume” that what “ought to be” is “possible (in praxis)”, he wants to reenergize our sense of agency so that the ills of fatalism, apathy, complicity with the dominant ideology, can be shaken off. For Kant these are critical times and maybe the times should always be especially critical. He writes: “[our] epoch is in especial degree, the epoch of critique, and to critique everything must submit” (Kant 1983, 9 Axii). This critical urgency is felt and thought by Schérer. Whilst referring to Kant’s indictment of “political moralists” who defend established power structures, Schérer boldly makes a stand *for* hospitality, and *against* the dominant discourse on immigration. Schérer passionately declares:

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No! It is a case of absolutely refusing, of radically opposing, everything represents the foreigner negatively as an intruder, and not positively as an invaluable asset.

Everything that merely tolerates the stranger and doesn’t welcome him.

The living conditions of those sinister, abject detention zones, of those holding pens, are not to be tolerated. The very idea that places of exception, beyond the reach of law, where rights are suspended can exist is intolerable (Schérer 2004, 126).

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Such a refusal of breaches of hospitality is an integral part of Schérer’s anarchism. He insists on the constitutional feasibility that:

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...in each of us there is more than just thought. There is passion, passionate attraction and- why not?- love. [We are capable of the] gesture of appealing to all visitors and fulfilling their expectations. Anarchism is not complete if the affirmation of oneself, that serves it as its basis and as its trampoline, is not open to encounters. Anarchism is, by nature, hospitable. It is a permanent offer of hospitality, in the face of others’ denigrating and mocking rejection of it (Schérer 2008, 14).

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3 Schérer insists how “we” are inalienably free to reject, for example, the bad treatment of  
4 asylum seekers. “We” do fortunately have choices and can make decisions<sup>17</sup>.  
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8 This being said, whilst making a principled stand against abuses of hospitality, against  
9 “immoral” behaviour –that is at the present moment happening on a daily basis against  
10 “foreigners, whether migrants or refugees- , Schérer is also very much an affirmed and  
11 principled “immoralist”, like Pasolini, Gide, Artaud, Guy Hocquembien (authors he often  
12 cites). Indicative of this stance is his categorical refusal of what he sees as today’s “victimary  
13 society” (*la société victimaire*) which encourages us to categorise some as “victims” and  
14 others as guilty. To do so, often with the aid of psychoanalytical discourse that- and this is the  
15 reason for his objection- divests us of our liberty. Hence his appreciation of Deleuze and  
16 Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*: institutionalised Freudian psychoanalysis was by seen by them, and  
17 Schérer wholeheartedly agrees, as locking us into predetermining and disempowering  
18 mamma-papa relations. Hence also his controversial questioning of “minority” as a  
19 systematised policing of sexuality. Not unrelated to this libertarian deregularisation of sexual  
20 issues is his understanding of the “case” of Natasha Kampusch. This Austrian female was  
21 kidnapped when she was ten years old and sequestered for more than eight years in an  
22 underground vault For Schérer, it is significant that Kampusch refused to take on the  
23 conventionalised role of the victim that the media world so much wanted her to play. For him,  
24 she refused to denounce her abuser, by speaking like an abused person and therefore kept her  
25 “secret”. Schérer pays her homage in the following way:  
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38 She represents the refusal to give in to all the media hype of today. She stands for the  
39 density, profundity and secrecy of *life*, in stark contrast to the puppets or ghosts of the  
40 televisual world, that uses its pixellising effects supposedly to respect people’s  
41 anonymity, whilst at the same time avidly soliciting them for their confessions  
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45 (Schérer 2008a, 13).

46 The category “victim” is indicative for Schérer of “a threatening society”, a society that  
47 requires, and trades in, supposedly clear-cut distinctions (Schérer 2008a, 14). Such a society  
48 cannot tolerate ambiguity and complexity, despite feeding on ambivalence. It crudely carves  
49 the world into what is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or not. This society fosters a  
50 blame “culture” wherein one always fears getting on the “wrong side”. Blame “culture”  
51 paradoxically leads to a world where abuses of power, gross misconduct and lamentable  
52 negligence end up being “nobody’s fault”<sup>18</sup> In such a society- which is ours- despite the  
53 existence of hierarchies, *nay precisely because of hierarchies exist*, no-one ultimately takes  
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3 responsibility for themselves and their actions. Consequently, blame is handed down, pushed  
4 sideways, whilst upwardly directed complaints are deflected. Reigns of terror take control at  
5 varying scales as, Schérer suggests:  
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8 ...everyone revels in being a victim and in designating a perpetrator so as to divest  
9 themselves of their own freedom. On this point I am totally in agreement with Sartre:  
10 at no moment should one stop affirming oneself as the author of oneself and of one's  
11 acts so as not to become a larva, a thing. But unfortunately this is what many people  
12 love being and want to be.... (Schérer 2007, 161).  
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16 By reneging on our liberty, we become more or less actively complicit with corruption. We  
17 therefore in effect contribute to the unhealthy, sickening, destabilising sense of crisis that  
18 dominates our culture<sup>19</sup>.  
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23 If we refuse to become a "larva" and instead affirm the "authorship" of our acts, this is not to  
24 say that we are to have recourse to a traditional notion of "subjectivity"<sup>20</sup>. As we have  
25 probably gathered by now, Schérer insists on how we are composed in an ongoing fashion  
26 with and through others, especially those who are "contemporaries". For Schérer (following  
27 Jean-Clet Martin), "contemporaries" are not so much those living in the same period as  
28 ourselves. "Contemporaries" are more those who "live with us". They are those "untimely"  
29 historical figures (philosophers, artists, writers) who we carry in us, who speak to us, who  
30 transmit their ideas and commentaries on life to us through time and thereby accompany us in  
31 our concrete lives<sup>21</sup>. Schérer's prime "contemporary", in this sense, was Fourier whose work,  
32 as we know, promoted the multiplication of social relations and the proliferation of passionate  
33 attractions.  
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43 Schérer's Fourierist exploration of the complexities of passions in the name of a "new  
44 anarchism" does not signal, on his part, a rejection of all "rationality". However, as we have  
45 seen already, Schérer does reject the "presumptuousness" [*l'outrecuidance*] that often attends  
46 claims for rationality (Schérer 2004, 112). For Schérer, one of the gravest risks facing us is  
47 losing ourselves in the presumptuousness of "being right". He alerts us to the danger of:  
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51 ...fall[ing] into the blunders [*les bévues*] that proceed from dogmatism, from one's  
52 incapacity to open oneself to others and to take into consideration the other's point of  
53 view (Schérer 2004, 112)<sup>22</sup>.  
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56 Schérer deduces that, if one guards oneself from "presumptuousness", then concepts such as  
57 Reason and Being Right can:  
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3 ...never be established and possessed once and for all; [they are] always in movement,  
4 [they are] continually being modified, reassessed in the light of varying set of  
5 references (Schérer 2004, 116).  
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8 Schérer fully concurs with Deleuze's analysis of reason as being "not a faculty but a process"  
9 (ibid). Deleuze advocates that:

10  
11 there is a pluralism of reason because we have no basis [motif] for thinking either  
12 matter or actions as unique. We define, we invent a process of rationalisation each  
13 time we introduce [*instaure*] human relations into any form of matter, into any sort of  
14 ensemble, into any sort of multiplicity (Deleuze cited by Schérer ibid).  
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18 Schérer makes it clear that this conceptualisation of reason has far-reaching (cosmo)political  
19 effects:  
20

21 Reason is taken as a process. Reason is understood as an installation of human  
22 relations in a "matter", in a "multiplicity". If we translate these propositions into the  
23 Kantian frame of reference I used earlier, this "matter" consists in the relations  
24 between states, i.e. international relations. Reason consists in introducing into them  
25 human relations. Multiplicity is the planet's diverse populations [*peuples*]. Reason is  
26 the introduction of human relations in the form of cosmopolitical right, taking into  
27 account ethnic and cultural diversity and the diversity of "reasons" that exist (Schérer  
28 2004, 116).  
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34 As "reason" is no governing principle that can be extrapolated from emerging matters, it leads  
35 to anarchy. As we saw earlier, anarchy is defined as the "refusal to impose in any way a  
36 principle of operating that precedes the operations of the real" (Châtelet cited by Schérer  
37 2008a 20-21). With this stance, Schérer is in effect echoing the sentiments expressed by  
38 Proudhon in his notorious 1846 letter to Marx:  
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42 ...simply because we are leaders of a movement, let us not instigate a new  
43 intolerance. Let us not set ourselves up as the apostles of a new religion, even if it  
44 be the religion of logic or of reason. ... Let us never consider any question  
45 exhausted, and when we have used our very last argument, let us begin again if  
46 necessary, with eloquence and irony. On this condition I will join your association  
47 with pleasure, otherwise I will not. (Proudhon 1969, 150-51).  
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53 As we know, Proudhon was indefatigably committed to the idea and practice of  
54 independent living, working, and thinking, hence his deep suspicion of any  
55 systematized, institutionalized, and hierarchized party politics. However, this advocacy  
56 of individual liberty is far from being asocial or antisocial; for Proudhon it offers  
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precisely a means by which a new form of sociability can be produced.

Schérer's views on political parties reflects Proudhon's. He was a one time member of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) until his (homosexual) life style was judged "incompatible with proletarian morality" (Schérer 2007, 41). Prepared to resign from the Party- but not permitted to do so- he was formally expelled in 1954<sup>23</sup>. His anarchism is a confirmation of his political commitments that are dependent on no party, and on no model. Reflecting on his past experiences, Schérer identifies two forms of political engagement for the "intellectual". The first one is where an intellectual adheres to a movement or party that is in many ways exterior to him/her, and complies with rules, maybe out of a sense of guilt for being privileged. Schérer suggests that this situation can lead to a masochistic form of political engagement. However he considers that there is second form of engagement that is a far more inventive and creative, whereby the intellectual defines and organizes his own action. This second option enables the intellectual to engage (micro-)politically on his/her own terrain. Whilst the revolutionary combat against the state remains the ultimate goal, in the meantime other struggles and objectives are able to express themselves in a more immediate way. For Schérer, this second form of political life permitted him to engage more with what he calls "the desiring or socio-political minorities" (Schérer 2007, 44). As an alternative to party politics, it helped him develop more immediate forms of resistance. Once liberated from the waiting until everything gets radically changed "from above", he felt enabled to act more immediately in helping others along the militant path towards change. For Schérer, this second form of political activism marked "the end of the ostracism of the unorganized, of the *Lumpenproletariat*, of the excluded from history, of utopians" (ibid 46). Indicative of such engagement with marginalized minorities was his involvement in FHAR (Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire) and with transsexuals during the creative Vincennes years 1969-1980.

Vincennes is synonymous with an experimental university life. At Vincennes there was no selection for entry, no pre-planned programmes as such, no grading, in fact, Schérer adds, "no teaching" as such (Schérer 2007: 17-26; 2004, 95-109). This absence of "authority" did not mean that no serious work got done at "anarchical" Vincennes. Despite, or maybe precisely because of, its utopianism, Vincennes engaged far more with the "real" world than many universities today that are caught in a grotesque neoliberal-bureaucratic bubble than they



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3 cannot, or don't want to, burst. Vincennes was certainly of its time, but maybe it should also  
4 be of ours, i.e. it should become be our "contemporary".  
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8 Referring with approval to Daniel Colson's entry for "anarchy" in his *Petit lexique*  
9 *philosophique anarchiste*, a book that gives an stimulating rereading of the philosophy of  
10 anarchism through the works of Deleuze, Schérer also agrees that:  
11

12 Anarchy is not reducible to a [supposedly] "utopian" political model of absent  
13 government, deferred until the end of time (Colson 2001, 26).  
14

15  
16 As Schérer also repeatedly emphasises, anarchy is first and foremost the refusal of all first  
17 principles, of all first causes, of all "ontological pretension", of all dependence of beings on a  
18 unique origin (often equated with God)" (Colson *ibid* 26-7, Schérer 2008a, 106).  
19

20  
21 Colson reiterates that:

22 ...anarchy, as an origin, as an aim, and as a means, is the affirmation of the multiple,  
23 of the unlimited diversity of beings and their capacity to compose a world without  
24 hierarchy, without domination, without other dependences other than the free  
25 association of radically free and autonomous forces (*ibid* 27).  
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29 This positive form of anarchy, inspired by Proudhon, does not attempt to resolve  
30 contradictions, to dissolve or absorb differences but remains content to "seriate their  
31 profusion". As we know from *What is Property?* such an ongoingly organised series also has  
32 the capacity to generate our needs, rights and duties in this world and in the world to come. It  
33 can produce effects<sup>24</sup>.  
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39 For Schérer, the project of making incompatibles co-live, of animating them together, of  
40 working with, and through, them- rather than subsuming them into an all-encompassing  
41 identity- is evocative of Leibniz' analysis in *Theodicy* of a glass palace with several floors,  
42 each one containing the different possible developments of the same life. For Leibniz there is  
43 a multiplicity of possibles but only one world where all the possibles of different people are  
44 "compossible". What we have not done in life are "impossibles". Schérer suggests that  
45 often art and literature imagine and explore the coexistence of impossibles, attempting to  
46 animate them and make them live together. Indeed art and literature often "exploit and expose  
47 these impossibilities", they even attempt to present them simultaneously, a project that  
48 philosophers often turn their backs on (Schérer 2007, 113).  
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3 Pushing at philosophy's limits, Schérer looks forward to a way of thinking and doing that  
4 accepts impossibles, that takes on board the various bifurcations- latent, actualized,  
5 emerging- of life. For him such a philosophy would be utopian. Reminding us of utopia's  
6 etymological origin, both no-place (u/ou) and good (eu) place", Schérer writes:

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10 Utopia is the form that thought takes, the form of an idea concerning "the earth",  
11 understood as humanity's situation on this earth, our occupation of this planet, our  
12 dwelling on this earth... Utopia is above all a thinking about place (Schérer 2007,  
13 117).

14  
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16 Utopia is no-where in particular but for this very reason it is possibly everywhere. Hence,  
17 accompanying utopia, is the urgent injunction to us to define and practise the best possible  
18 occupation of the world *as a whole*. "The question to pose about utopia is less "what" is it?,  
19 [*qu'est-ce que*] than "how, when, where" is it? [*comment, quand, où*] (ibid 118). Schérer  
20 points out that in *Erewhon* Samuel Butler similarly transforms the negativity implicit in the  
21 no-placeness, the nowhere-ness of utopia, into an engagement with the Here and Now (Ere-  
22 whon), into a demand made to us here, in the present moment, to extract ourselves from the  
23 conventions, pressures and imperatives of the actual world. Schérer advocates that:

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26 Utopia is the thinking of possibles, imaginatively concretised, independent of the  
27 constraints of the actual" (ibid 116).

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30 However, the hospitable entertaining of such utopian possibles, once deemed hopelessly  
31 impossible, does not remove us forever from the actual world. On the contrary. We return  
32 to our world with a reinvigorated sense of its potential for change and of our creative agency.

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35 In his discussion of contemporary "globalization", Schérer pertinently poses us with the  
36 following problematic question and offers us a possible mode of operation. He writes:

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39 How can one ensure that what must be a rational tendency towards the unity of the  
40 earth, towards the formation of the idea of one humanity goes hand in hand with the  
41 recognition of the infinite and irreducible diversity of species and individuals? This is  
42 our problem. It is what we are calling *anarchist utopia* (Schérer 2008b, 79).

43  
44  
45 For Schérer what is needed to realise this project for a "one humanity" is the theory and  
46 practice of *anarcho-utopian hospitality*. Schérer's distinctive focus on anarchism's affinity  
47 with a project for a better world to come (utopianism), and its relation to a different approach  
48 to others (hospitality), provides us with a living testimony of its continuing importance for  
49 resisting dominant trends and bringing about radical change today. Anarcho-utopian  
50 hospitality is, as Schérer continues to insist, "a demand for the future" (Schérer 2004: 1).

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own less otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> I am currently translating one of his books, *Zeus hospitalier: éloge de l'hospitalité* (first published in 1993). Given the dominant xenophobic climate with thousands of migrants drowning regularly in the seas, this major work unfortunately still makes a major contribution to the politically sensitive topic of our relation to others, of our ability to receive them amongst us without hostility, indeed with open arms, or not.

<sup>3</sup> In “To have done with the Judgement of God”, Artaud describes consciousness as “an appetite, the appetite for living ». He thereby deflects our interest away from a *ratio* located in some controlling centre of our subjectivity towards something more corporeal. Schérer’s *Anarchist Food...* draws its sustenance not only from Artaud, but also from the produce of Leibniz, Nietzsche, Pasolini and Deleuze and Guattari,, as well as Fourier of course.

<sup>4</sup> As we will discuss again later, the unmasking of « presumptuousness » [*outrecuidance, Vermessenheit*] is of major concern of Schérer as it closes down possibilities for encountering alternative ways of thinking and doing, and its preformatted categorisation of situations generates injustices.

<sup>5</sup> In *Après tout*, Schérer stresses the importance for his long-term partner, the writer Guy Hocquenghem, of «the multiple, the diverse, the elusive, and the imperceptible» (Schérer & Lagasnerie 2007, 32). We are told that Hocquemben, like Schérer himself, was «repulsed by the dominant trend to identify oneself », to obey « the command to «structure oneself as a subject »» (ibid). The « homo » of « homosexuality » therefore does not signal a consolidation of « sameness » for these two thinkers. Indeed Schérer cites Hocquemben as saying : « being homosexual to use this unfortunate expression [*comme on dit vilainement*] was a way being in foreign places [*une manière d'être à l'étranger*] » (ibid 34). Schérer adds : «to be there : in a foreign place, in love with a stranger, and also to be estranged from oneself [*et aussi étranger à soi*] » (ibid). Here « homosexuality » joins forces with « hospitality » in this exposing of oneself to what is other. This refusal of the model of a consolidated identity, in the name of an openness to difference, might well entail danger. Indeed, Pasolini lost his life whilst frequenting the « deviant » underworld [*la pègre*] on the dark beaches of Ostie outside Rome. Instead of being seduced by the more dignified conspiracy theories of a politically -motivated assassination, Hocquemben and Schérer prefer to endorse Pasolini’s « impiety and sensitivity to the [immanent] sacrality of life ». Rather than being something to be refuted, or even regretted, Pasolini’s «sordid [*crapuleux*] murder is the crowning glory of a destiny, and it incontestably makes his greatness» (Schérer 2007, 36).

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4<sup>6</sup> For the term “playspace [*Spielraum, espace de jeu*], see Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the  
5 Age of Its Reproducibility” (2002, 127).  
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7<sup>7</sup> Schérer refers here to Raymond Ruyer’s analysis of utopia. Ruyer (1988, 9) writes: “To  
8 understand a fact, an event, we need to skim over it without being absorbed by it; without  
9 considering it as something absolute, as something unchangeable. To see its lateral  
10 possibilities. We can only understand something if we mentally accompany it with all its  
11 family of related possibilities ».  
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15<sup>8</sup> «*Pouvoir*» signals a (hierarchised, authoritarian) form of power that mutilates the  
16 potentialities of «*puissances* » by subjugating them to a partial and limiting regime (Colson  
17 2001, 255).  
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19

20<sup>9</sup> Schérer cites Heidegger (1984, 169) on Hölderlin’s « Hymn to the Ister » at this point. Given  
21 the recent disclosures relating to his *Black Notebooks* [*Schwarze Hefte*] with their blatant  
22 antisemitic statements, it is now even more difficult to refer without reservation to Heidegger  
23 in connection with the theme of hospitality towards « strangers ».  
24  
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27<sup>10</sup> The reference here is to Nietzsche (1989): *Ecce homo: How One Becomes Who One is*.

28<sup>11</sup> The heterotopian sanatorium in Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* features prominently  
29 in Schérer’s analysis of hospitality. He writes: “[In this novel] what one could call « the  
30 hospitable effect » is incontestable; cosmopolitan circulation, the intrusion of the *stranger*  
31 (*étranger*) and his redoubling by the *strange*... It is not a question of an accidental  
32 localisation, but of an allegorisation of the human condition where the world is experienced as  
33 strange and man becomes estranged from the world [*où le monde est ressenti comme étranger*  
34 *et l’homme étranger au monde*] where, in a paradoxical reversal, the strange becomes a  
35 positive value and constitutive of values» (2004, 19-20). Mann’s “Death in Venice” is also  
36 important to Schérer (e.g. *ibid* 18 & 20, 26-41).  
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44<sup>12</sup> See Schérer (2005) & Morgan (2010, 290-302 ; 2013, 120-139 ; 2014, 126-154 ; 2014, 59-  
45 71) for analyses of Kant and Proudhon’s cosmopolitical thinking.  
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47<sup>13</sup> Cornell’s boxes encapsulate much of what Schérer evokes when discussing ho(s)tels as  
48 particularly highly-charged heterotopian spaces. They can contain the macrosm within their  
49 sometimes microcosmic rooms. A diverse range of people, each with different stories to tell  
50 reside under different conditions in ho(s)tels. For an analysis of one such refuge, the Salvation  
51 Army’s « asile flottant » (re-designed by Le Corbusier, see Morgan (2014c) See Hocquembien  
52 & Schérer (2013, 128-9) for a reference to Cornell’s work.  
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<sup>14</sup> The touching and intelligent film by Aki Kaurismaki, « Le Havre » (2011) about an illegable immigrant who is given refuge by a working-class community springs to mind in this context. See also Derrida's work on hospitality (e.g. 1997). As Schérer (2007, 110-111) states, he wrote *Zeus hospitalier* (1993) before learning about any of Derrida's work on this subject.

<sup>15</sup> Hence the title of his book *Pari sur l'impossible* (1989) which echoes one of the slogans of May 1968 : « demand the impossible ! » Of course in his « Perpetual Peace » essay, Kant himself limits hospitality to a conditional «right of resort » [*Besuchsrecht*] instead of promoting an unconditional «right of a guest » [*Gastrecht*]. This restriction can be construed either as a rather miserly form of hospitality (that gives the lie to his «enlightened » vision), or as a sign that Kant is keenly aware of the dangers of colonisation that less powerful territories face and their need to protect themselves from such exploitative invaders (Schérer 2004, 3-4 ; 2005, e.g. 72-82).

<sup>16</sup> Other philosophers who also feature in Schérer's work because of their similar openness to the impossible are Leibniz, Spinoza, Deleuze, Guattari and Derrida.

<sup>17</sup> This « we » would have to be infracted through questions of class/ethnicity and even (trans)gender/sexuality, though it is not necessarily rich, white, heterosexual couples who are necessarily most capable of (or rather predisposed to) receiving « the other » into their midst...

<sup>18</sup> To cite Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* (1997, first published 1934), a damning critique of a society that is both decadently *laissez-faire*, and mercilessly exclusive.

<sup>19</sup> See Morgan (2014b) for an account of how Christophe Dejours' notion of "living work", together with a reading of Kant and Proudhon's cosmopolitics, can contribute to a debunking of the paralysing sense of "crisis".

<sup>20</sup> For me, the French expression "*assumer la responsabilité*" (to take responsibility for; be accountable for) neatly encapsulates this act of affirming oneself to be the author of one's actions (without necessarily entailing a notion of centred subjectivity).

<sup>21</sup> See Nietzsche (1987: 60; 1988: 247) for his notion of "untimeliness" that Schérer probably has in mind when reflecting on the contemporary: "untimely- that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come" [*unzeitgemäß- das heisst gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit- zu wirken*].

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<sup>22</sup> Once again Kant's emphasis on relentless critique is a point of reference for him when he is reflecting on Bush's (presumptuous) statement made on the day after 9/11/2001 that "we [us Americans] are so good, why do they hate us so?"... (Schérer 2004, 111).

<sup>23</sup> No-one resigns from The Party. The Party is not resignable-from.

<sup>24</sup> See Morgan (2014a, 137-143 ; 2014b 59-71) on the cosmopolitical significance of Proudhon's seriality.

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