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)\(^1\).

“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.

René Schérer (born 1922) is lamentably almost unknown to the Anglo-American world as his work has, as yet, not been translated\(^2\). 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.
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 Schérerian 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”³. 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,
the internal nothingness
of my self
which is night,
nothingness,
thoughtlessness,
but which is explosive affirmation
that there is
something
to make room for:
my body.

(Artaud in Schérer 2008a, 21).

This “explosive affirmation” of corporeality is neither in the name of its misrecognized
“goodness”, nor necessarily in the name of due “rights”. Indeed, Schérer seeks to destabilise
out presumptuous tendency to legislate in accordance with notions of morality⁴. He is
concerned with exposing “our moralizing mania, our obsession with security, which is forever
driving us to name and detect some new crime against which we then concoct new
legislation” (Schérer 2008a, 19). The “body”- which is not perceived as one “thing”, as one
organized “entity”- should remain rebellious to such codification and classification.
Corporealised resistance is a major feature of Schérer’s anarchism.

In Anarchist Food...the “outlawed”, “micropolitical” topic of homosexuality is addressed⁵.
“Micropolitics” refers to those desires that are conventionally relegated to the “domestic” or
“private” and that demand expression, but not with the aim of being assimilated or in any way
normalized within a conventional system (Schérer 2008a, 81). Schérer opens his series of
essays by proposing an “anarchist method” (ibid 20). Here he cites with approval François
Châtelet’s definition of anarchy as it appears in the collection The Revolution Without Model:
anarchy is not the absence of organisation, it is the absence of transcendance. It is the
refusal to impose, in whatever form, a principle of functioning that precedes the real.
The idea of interiority is transcendance par excellence.

(Châtelet cited by Schérer ibid 20-21).

Hence an anarchist “method” is a rebellious breaking away from the governing authority of
laws and norms which explains its always more or less “criminal” – or “outlawed”-status (ibid
20). An integral aspect of this refusal of conceptual predetermination is the rejection of a
supposedly controlling, centralised “subjectivity”, of a presumed core “interiority that always lays claim to a transcendence that functions as an ultimate refuge” (ibid).

As we will see in this article, this venturing outside the classical “refuge of subjectivity” is for Schérer paramount to entering an “anarchist utopia”. Utopianism is indissociable from the name of René Schérer. Often used in derogatory fashion to indicate unrealistic “castles in the sky” that are disconnected from the real world, the term “utopian” is positively charged for Schérer. One of his major sources for his sense of the potentiality of utopian thought is, again, Charles Fourier. According to Fourier, social change cannot be brought about by appealing to an abstract, disembodied notion of reason that all humans are supposed to have in common. Indeed, the focus on what makes supposed « reasonable » sense thwarts qualitative social change as those very mechanisms, the passions, that exist to combine us into social harmony, are stultified. A creatively dynamic social whole is produced, not in spite of the passions, but in a finely tuned concert with them as long as they are expansively developed in what he calls a “progressive series” (Fourier 2006, 15). Indeed, Fourier flouts “civilized” society’s logical certainties when he claims that whereas one cannot associate three families, one can easily associate three hundred (2001a, 266). His advocates that more numerous the passions are, the more easily will they harmonize with each other (Fourier 2008, 13). Social harmony cannot arise from a commonality of stock characteristics that “we” are all supposed to share. Instead it emerges from the proliferation of intensely divergent passions through which the individual unit, itself an artificial and egotistical construct of a brutalizing world of commercial speculation and social exploitation, is refracted as if through a prism. Nature, including humans, was originally no monoculture (Fourier 2001b : 113). Like other, more natural forms, we too thrive in profusion. The colorful, multifaceted embodied personality that is able to re-emerge in Fourier’s radical social experiment in the phalansteries is predisposed to, and can “intermesh with” [engrener], a range of people with and against whom they can nurture their diverse, sometimes bizarre and hybrid tastes, interests, and predilections.

A Fourierist society is multi-headed and gregarious. As we have seen, it is not controlled by any transcendent authority. Schérer purports that it would be a society that knows neither courts nor judgments, only passions and attractions, and whose aim is to « multiply social relations » (Schérer 2008a, 57). In Schérer’s Pour un nouvel anarchisme anarchy, which is « utopian »—inasmuch as it is a necessarily ongoing quest for a “stateless society”- is presented as a “playspace” [espace de jeu] (Schérer 2008b, 30)⁶. Anarchy is a “lubricating
oil” that relaxes and opens up the “mechanisms of power” [dispositifs de pouvoir] thereby permitting new possibilities to emerge (ibid). In other words, anarchism is a resistant/irresistible “political paradigm” and a powerfully “immanent critique” that has the potential to expose the closed “rigidity of political principles to the test of praxis” (ibid 31). As such anarchism shares the same spaces as utopian theory and practice: utopianism is “a topos of the impossible that has become a necessity for thought and action” especially in “times of catastrophes, blockages and despair”.

For Schérer today’s society is characterized by “securitarian politics and a withdrawal into an individualistic opportunism” [un repli sir l’arrivisme individual] (Schérer 2014, 113). Desires have been commodified, i.e. manufactured and standardized, therefore those very dynamic forces that could be mobilized to bring about alternative ways of living have been deactivated. Utopianism enables them to restore their “passional movement” [le mouvement passionnel] by enjoining us to “encounter the impossible” or rather, what is conventionally perceived as impossible but which might well be laterally possible (ibid 108 & 115). Utopianism speaks from another space, far beyond the confines of what is deemed to be the “status quo”, things as they supposedly “are”. Likewise Schérer pushes the boundaries. His thinking and doing engages with liminality, with what happens at the margins. Unimpressed by the presumptuousness (l’outrecuidance) of power [pouvoir] that makes such great claims for its central importance, he affirms the creative potentiality of multifarious puissances. In Hospitalités (2004), la puissance or potentia is affirmed as that which is proper [propre, eigen, peculiar] to humans. The “proper” is not understood as an intrinsic property of humans, but rather as our capacity to be carried outside of ourselves, beyond our own limits and to be transformed by our “passionate attractions” and encounters. Schérer reiterates that “the appropriation of what is one’s own is to be found only in the hospitable confrontation and dialogue with the foreigner/stranger” (Schérer 2004, 24). This “appropriation” is an affirmation of who we are (becoming), it is also a letting go of presumptuous claims to an “identity”, and a refusal to conform to reactionary identitarian categorisations: Schérer makes it clear how this philosophical position necessarily leads to a vision of a better world, animated by a different form of politics, in the following passage:

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.
In short hospitality consists essentially in the relation to the other that it introduces. To receive, to welcome, to recognise in the other one’s likeness [semblable] and, what is more, to appreciate his presence, his contact, as a contribution and an enrichment, not as an irritation. To move away from a conception of the world that valorises “the same”, the “identical”, to the detriment of everything that is foreign, towards a philosophy that attaches great value to the other, to the respect of differences (Schérer 2004, 2-3).

Schérer’s thinking and praxis makes a consistent stand against the all too frequent representation of the foreigner/stranger as a problem to be dealt with. That which is foreign and strange in all its various guises becomes a positive source of value and meaning\(^{11}\). In turn this estranging becomes constitutive of one’s ever changing, multiple identities. In generously receiving the other, the host [l’hôte] also becomes a guest [l’hôte]. The praxis of hospitality can transform our relation to the particular space we occupy on this spherical planet: we are no longer able to lay claim to specific patches of the land’s surface as our “private property”, removed for generations, if not forever, from communal circulation\(^{12}\). Instead our particular location can only be conceived as having been lent to us as a temporary possession, like a hotel/hostel frequented at various times by different visitors.
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 “determinational”, one that can be barocky 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 juridically 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. Hospitality can therefore be equated, not only with a dynamic process of interaction, but also with a boldly tendentious, hyperbolic demand to expose ourselves ever more to what is
ideologically demarcated as being “other” and as belonging “outside”; it can thereby reveal, and even rebelliously expose, the defensive and miserly fault-lines of the laws of the land.

Schérer draws on the work of Immanuel Kant, as well as Proudhon, for his sense of hospitality’s political potency (Schérer 2005 e.g. 53-114). In his utopian text, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”, Kant had presented hospitality as the very basis of the cosmopolitan law of the future. Hospitality, a regulative idea for our future praxis, was generated from the physico-geographical fact of the earth’s sphericity. Kant had established the primordially communal possession of the earth’s surface [des Rechts des gemeinschaftlichen Besitzes der Oberfläche der Erde] (Kant 1994, 106ff). This ‘right to the earth’s surface’ arises by virtue of the planet’s globality”, the fact that it is a sphere [Kugelfläche], which pre-empts an infinite dispersal of human beings. Earth dwellers are therefore ultimately obliged to find means of getting on with each other, solicited by nature to cultivate the civilising arts of hospitality (Schérer 1993, 65-6). There is no alternative to, no escape from, our duties and rights towards others as there would be with an endless, flat surface. Kant had also reminded us that originally, before the springing up of states and countries, no-one had any more right of possession to patches of the earth’s surface than anyone else: the right to hospitality draws on this natural law as well. Schérer draws our attention to how, for Kant, a theory always has a “practical implications” [une incidence pratique], and how theoretical, even hypothetical, formulations of right are, like moral laws, injunctions for action that contravene the empirical short-term predictions of pragmatism and that reject the supposed certitudes of dogmatic politics (ibid). Therefore Kant’s focus on an originally grounded universal hospitality [Gastfreundlichkeit], that generates rights, signals to a militant form of “utopian” politics, one that does not settle down within pre-existing institutionalised limits but which works at the limits for change and for the materialisation of what is ruled out as impossible (e.g. zero immigration laws). Schérer reinforces this voice of Kant, telling us we must bet on what is “impossible”¹⁵. In this valorisation of what is usually dismissed he solicits the support of Fourier who castigated those unimaginative, reactionary defenders of the status quo in the following manner:

The impossible is the shield of the philosophers, the fortress of the poor of spirit and the weak of heart. Once armoured with the word Impossibility, they use it to rule out all new ideas (Fourier cited in Schérer 1989, 4).

For Schérer, Kant is a philosopher who does not wield the “impossible” as a way of restricting what is morally justified and (cosmo)politically desirable¹⁶.
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 tatleeren 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:

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).

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

…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).
Schérer insists how “we” are inalienably free to reject, for example, the bad treatment of asylum seekers. “We” do fortunately have choices and can make decisions

This being said, whilst making a principled stand against abuses of hospitality, against “immoral” behaviour— that is at the present moment happening on a daily basis against “foreigners, whether migrants or refugees—, Schérer is also very much an affirmed and principled “immoralist”, like Pasolini, Gide, Artaud, Guy Hocquemben (authors he often cites). Indicative of this stance is his categorical refusal of what he sees as today’s “victimary society” (la société victimaire) which encourages us to categorise some as “victims” and others as guilty. To do so, often with the aid of psychoanalytical discourse that— and this is the reason for his objection— divests us of our liberty. Hence his appreciation of Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus: institutionalised Freudian psychoanalysis was by seen by them, and Schérer wholeheartedly agrees, as locking us into predetermining and disempowering mamma-papa relations. Hence also his controversial questioning of “minority” as a systematised policing of sexuality. Not unrelated to this libertarian dereregularisation of sexual issues is his understanding of the “case” of Natasha Kampusch. This Austrian female was kidnapped when she was ten years old and sequestered for more than eight years in an underground vault For Schérer, it is significant that Kampusch refused to take on the conventionalised role of the victim that the media world so much wanted her to play. For him, she refused to denounce her abuser, by speaking like an abused person and therefore kept her “secret”. Schérer pays her homage in the following way:

She represents the refusal to give in to all the media hype of today. She stands for the density, profundity and secrecy of life, in stark contrast to the puppets or ghosts of the televisual world, that uses its pixellising effects supposedly to respect people’s anonymity, whilst at the same time avidly soliciting them for their confessions (Schérer 2008a, 13).

The category “victim” is indicative for Schérer of “a threatening society”, a society that requires, and trades in, supposedly clear-cut distinctions (Schérer 2008a, 14). Such a society cannot tolerate ambiguity and complexity, despite feeding on ambivalence. It crudely carves the world into what is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or not. This society fosters a blame “culture” wherein one always fears getting on the “wrong side”. Blame “culture” paradoxically leads to a world where abuses of power, gross misconduct and lamentable negligence end up being “nobody’s fault”18 In such a society— which is ours— despite the existence of hierarchies, nay precisely because of hierarchies exist, no-one ultimately takes
responsibility for themselves and their actions. Consequently, blame is handed down, pushed sideways, whilst upwardly directed complaints are deflected. Reigns of terror take control at varying scales as, Schérer suggests:

…everyone revels in being a victim and in designating a perpetrator so as to divest themselves of their own freedom. On this point I am totally in agreement with Sartre: at no moment should one stop affirming oneself as the author of oneself and of one’s acts so as not to become a larva, a thing. But unfortunately this is what many people love being and want to be…. (Schérer 2007, 161).

By reneging on our liberty, we become more or less actively complicit with corruption. We therefore in effect contribute to the unhealthy, sickening, destabilising sense of crisis that dominates our culture.¹⁹

If we refuse to become a “larva” and instead affirm the “authorship” of our acts, this is not to say that we are to have recourse to a traditional notion of “subjectivity.”²⁰ As we have probably gathered by now, Schérer insists on how we are composed in an ongoing fashion with and through others, especially those who are “contemporaries”. For Schérer (following Jean-Clet Martin), “contemporaries” are not so much those living in the same period as ourselves. “Contemporaries” are more those who “live with us”. They are those “untimely” historical figures (philosophers, artists, writers) who carry in us, who speak to us, who transmit their ideas and commentaries on life to us through time and thereby accompany us in our concrete lives.²¹ Schérer’s prime “contemporary”, in this sense, was Fourier whose work, as we know, promoted the multiplication of social relations and the proliferation of passionate attractions.

Schérer’s Fourierist exploration of the complexities of passions in the name of a “new anarchism” does not signal, on his part, a rejection of all “rationality”. However, as we have seen already, Schérer does reject the “presumptuousness” [l’outrecuidance] that often attends claims for rationality (Schérer 2004, 112). For Schérer, one of the gravest risks facing us is losing ourselves in the presumptuousness of “being right”. He alerts us to the danger of:

…fall[ing] into the blunders [les bêvues] that proceed from dogmatism, from one’s incapacity to open oneself to others and to take into consideration the other’s point of view (Schérer 2004, 112).²²

Schérer deduces that, if one guards oneself from “presumptuousness”, then concepts such as Reason and Being Right can:
never be established and possessed once and for all; [they are] always in movement, [they are] continually being modified, reassessed in the light of varying set of references (Schérer 2004, 116).

Schérer fully concurs with Deleuze’s analysis of reason as being “not a faculty but a process” (ibid). Deleuze advocates that:

there is a plurality of reason because we have no basis [motif] for thinking either matter or actions as unique. We define, we invent a process of rationalisation each time we introduce [instaure] human relations into any form of matter, into any sort of ensemble, into any sort of multiplicity (Deleuze cited by Schérer ibid).

Schérer makes it clear that this conceptualisation of reason has far-reaching (cosmo)political effects:

Reason is taken as a process. Reason is understood as an installation of human relations in a “matter”, in a “multiplicity”. If we translate these propositions into the Kantian frame of reference I used earlier, this “matter” consists in the relations between states, i.e. international relations. Reason consists in introducing into them human relations. Multiplicity is the planet’s diverse populations [peuples]. Reason is the introduction of human relations in the form of cosmopolitical right, taking into account ethnic and cultural diversity and the diversity of “reasons” that exist (Schérer 2004, 116).

As “reason” is no governing principle that can be extrapolated from emerging matters, it leads to anarchy. As we saw earlier, anarchy is defined as the “refusal to impose in any way a principle of operating that precedes the operations of the real” (Châtelet cited by Schérer 2008a 20-21). With this stance, Schérer is in effect echoing the sentiments expressed by Proudhon in his notorious 1846 letter to Marx:

…simply because we are leaders of a movement, let us not instigate a new intolerance. Let us not set ourselves up as the apostles of a new religion, even if it be the religion of logic or of reason. … Let us never consider any question exhausted, and when we have used our very last argument, let us begin again if necessary, with eloquence and irony. On this condition I will join your association with pleasure, otherwise I will not. (Proudhon 1969, 150–51).

As we know, Proudhon was indefatigably committed to the idea and practice of independent living, working, and thinking, hence his deep suspicion of any systematized, institutionalized, and hierarchized party politics. However, this advocacy of individual liberty is far from being asocial or antisocial; for Proudhon it offers
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. 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 R évolutionnaire) 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
cannot, or don’t want to, burst. Vincennes was certainly of its time, but maybe it should also be of ours, i.e. it should become be our “contemporary”.

Referring with approval to Daniel Colson’s entry for “anarchy” in his Petit lexique philosophique anarchiste, a book that gives an stimulating rereading of the philosophy of anarchism through the works of Deleuze, Schérer also agrees that:

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

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

Colson reiterates that:

…anarchy, as an origin, as an aim, and as a means, is the affirmation of the multiple, of the unlimited diversity of beings and their capacity to compose a world without hierarchy, without domination, without other dependences other than the free association of radically free and autonomous forces (ibid 27).

This positive form of anarchy, inspired by Proudhon, does not attempt to resolve contradictions, to dissolve or absorb differences but remains content to “seriate their profusion”. As we know from What is Property? such an ongoingly organised series also has the capacity to generate our needs, rights and duties in this world and in the world to come. It can produce effects24.

For Schérer, the project of making incompatibles co-live, of animating them together, of working with, and through, them- rather than subsuming them into an all-encompassing identity- is evocative of Leibniz’ analysis in Theodicy of a glass palace with several floors, each one containing the different possible developments of the same life. For Leibniz there is a multiplicity of possibles but only one world where all the possibles of different people are “compossible”. What we have not done in life are “incompossibles”. Schérer suggests that often art and literature imagine and explore the coexistence of incompossibles, attempting to animate them and make them live together. Indeed art and literature often “exploit and expose these incompossibilities”, they even attempt to present them simultaneously, a project that philosophers often turn their backs on (Schérer 2007, 113).
Pushing at philosophy’s limits, Schérer looks forward to a way of thinking and doing that accepts incompossibles, that takes on board the various bifurcations- latent, actualized, emerging- of life. For him such a philosophy would be utopian. Reminding us of utopia’s etymological origin, both no-place (u/ou) and good (eu) place”, Schérer writes:

Utopia is the form that thought takes, the form of an idea concerning “the earth”, understood as humanity’s situation on this earth, our occupation of this planet, our dwelling on this earth… Utopia is above all a thinking about place (Schérer 2007, 117).

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

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

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

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

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

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


(2001b) Le nouveau monde industrielle et sociétaire (Dijon: Les presses du reel)


1 All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
2 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.
3 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.
4 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.
5 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).
6 For the term “playspace [Spielraum, espace de jeu], see Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility” (2002, 127).

7 Schérer refers here to Raymond Ruyer’s analysis of utopia. Ruyer (1988, 9) writes: “To understand a fact, an event, we need to skim over it without being absorbed by it; without considering it as something absolute, as something unchangeable. To see its lateral possibilities. We can only understand something if we mentally accompany it with all its family of related possibilities ».

8 «Pouvoir» signals a (hierarchised, authoritarian) form of power that mutilates the potentialities of «puissances» by subjugating them to a partial and limiting regime (Colson 2001, 255).

9 Schérer cites Heidegger (1984, 169) on Hölderlin’s « Hymn to the Ister » at this point. Given the recent disclosures relating to his Black Notebooks [Schwarze Hefte] with their blatant antisemitic statements, it is now even more difficult to refer without reservation to Heidegger in connection with the theme of hospitality towards « strangers ».

10 The reference here is to Nietzsche (1989): Ecce homo: How One Becomes Who One is.

11 The heterotopian sanatorium in Thomas Mann’s The Magic Mountain features prominently in Schérer’s analysis of hospitality. He writes: “[In this novel] what one could call « the hospitable effect » is incontestable; cosmopolitan circulation, the intrusion of the stranger (étranger) and his redoubling by the strange… It is not a question of an accidental localisation, but of an allegorisation of the human condition where the world is experienced as strange and man becomes estranged from the world [où le monde est ressenti comme étranger et l’homme étranger au monde] where, in a paradoxical reversal, the strange becomes a positive value and constitutive of values» (2004, 19-20). Mann’s “Death in Venice” is also important to Schérer (e.g. ibid 18 & 20, 26-41).


13 Cornell’s boxes encapulate much of what Schérer evokes when discussing ho(s)tel(s) as particularly highly-charged heterotopian spaces. They can contain the macrcosm within their sometimes microcosmic rooms. A diverse range of people, each with different stories to tell reside under different conditions in ho(s)tel(s). For an analysis of one such refuge, the Salvation Army’s « asile flottant » (re-designed by Le Corbusier, see Morgan (2014c) See Hocquemben & Schérer (2013, 128-9) for a reference to Cornell’s work.
The touching and intelligent film by Aki Kaurismaki, « Le Havre » (2011) about an illegible 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.

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).

Other philosophers who also feature in Schérer’s work because of their similar openness to the impossible are Leibniz, Spinoza, Deleuze, Guattari and Derrida.

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…

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.

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”.

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).

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*].
22 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).

23 No-one resigns from The Party. The Party is not resignable-from.

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