

13 *Volontà*: Workshop of Anarchist Research

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VOLONTÀ (MEANING 'WILL' in Italian) represents a particularly significant editorial experience in the landscape of Italian and European anarchist publishing (Masini et al. 1996). Giovanna Caleffi Berneri (who co-founded the journal with Cesare Zaccaria in 1946) was its main driving force and an important figure in Italian anarchism, with strong international connections between the immediate post-war years and her disappearance in 1962.* *Volontà* was the most important Italian anarchist journal in this difficult period for anarchism in Italy. Like other radical movements, anarchism emerged weakened from the rubble of war, its strength mutilated by the fascist dictatorship. It was difficult to reorient and renew anarchist thought at a time when the dominant economic and cultural logic was strongly conditioned by the Catholic Church and the parties of post-war reconstruction, Christian Democracy and the Communist Party. This mirrored the international climate, polarised into two opposing blocks: one governs whilst the other hegemonises the opposition. A dual dialectic was imposed that gave little space to other possible paths or to secular and libertarian cultures. In this context, leafing through the journal's pages from the period, we can appreciate the enormous effort made by its editors and collaborators, including the

* Giovanna Caleffi (1897–1962) was an Italian anarchist. She was forced to leave the country with the rise of fascism and spent the years of the dictatorship in several European countries with her partner, the anarchist philosopher Camillo Berneri. Berneri died in Barcelona in 1937 and after the end of World War II Caleffi returned to Italy, engaging in several cultural and educational projects until her death. For further information on her life and activism (in Italian), see De Maria (2010, 2019) and Berneri Family Archive (2012).

fundamental role of Pio Turrone,¹ to renew anarchism without repudiating its classical tradition through an open process of ‘cross-contamination’ with those cultural and political expressions of a secular and libertarian culture present and active in Italy.

The journal’s pages were enriched by international collaborators (George Orwell, Albert Camus, Paul Goodman, Vernon Richards, Alex Comfort, Herbert Read, Louis Mercier Vega, George Woodcock, Gaston Leval, Luce Fabbri, Giovanni Baldelli, Colin Ward and others) who offered the Italian reader a complex view of the economic, political, social and cultural realities in different countries. The Italian contributions were no less impressive, if we consider the quality of the various articles that appeared in *Volontà* (authors included Gaetano Salvemini, Ignazio Silone, Danilo Dolci, Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio, Pier Carlo Masini, Ugo Fedeli, Armando Borghi, Guido Tassinari and Luigi De Marchi). Each issue also contained selected pieces by classic anarchist authors who, in the editors’ opinions, had contemporary resonance and could outline the broad contours of a renewed anarchist thought.

In an attempt to take a more proactive and practical stance, compared with more traditional orientations on identity, the journal carried accounts and analyses of concrete experiences across diverse areas of social life that could be characterised as libertarian. We find, for example, alternative educational experiences (such as Alexander Neill’s Summerhill, Ernesto Codignola’s didactic experiments in Florence with the Pestalozzi school-city, Giovanna Caleffi’s Marie Louise Berneri summer colony for the children of comrades and the poor, the educational renewal of pedagogical activism, the activity of Aldo Capitini); anarchist communities’ experiences of production and the overall organisation of society during the 1936 Spanish Revolution; the problem of housing and urban planning; life in the *kibbutzim* first in Palestine and then in Israel; the promotion of a secular conception of motherhood and issues relating to birth control and contraception; support for initiatives and struggles over the secular-

¹ Pio Turrone (1906–1982) was known as the ‘bricklayer of anarchism’. He was an important figure both in Italy and internationally. An autodidact, he became an anarchist as a teenager and was forced into exile in 1923 to escape fascist repression (first to Belgium and then to France). Turrone knew and visited (among many others) the Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno and Camillo Berneri, with whom he became close friends in Barcelona in 1936. At the end of the war, after having fled to Mexico and England, he returned to Italy and became one of the most active militants in the reconstruction of the Italian anarchist movement. Thanks to his countless international anarchist connections (especially in the United States), Turrone represented the thread that provided Italian anarchism with an internationalist and critical vision (see Sensini 2004).

isation of culture and social and welfare organisations; support for workers' and peasants' struggles; anti-militarism and conscientious objection, pacifism and the struggles against the war industry; Italian and international current affairs, cultural and artistic experiences and so on. In short, a variety of issues and an open-minded approach characterises the pages of *Volontà* in its early years, to the extent that it can be considered an example of how to conceptualise and write a journal that remains loyal to the core of the classical anarchist tradition while exploring emerging anti-authoritarian social and cultural movements. The clear purpose was to stimulate thinking beyond existing militant circles, a thinking that otherwise risked being excluded from the attention of the wider population.

The death of Giovanna Caleffi Berneri was followed by a troubled period for the journal. The turnover of several editors and managers further exposed underlying issues such as the general pauperisation of Italian anarchist forces and the inability to cope effectively with the triumph of capitalist and state-centric logic in Italy and internationally. Despite the youth and workers' movement of the late 1960s bursting on to the Italian political and cultural scene, *Volontà* remained inward-looking and removed from the pervasive and innovative ferment that shook Italian society. Paradoxically, in 1969, when the student and workers' protest that exploded across the Western world signalled a renewed interest in libertarian and anarchist ideas and an increasing number of young people approached the anarchist movement, the journal reduced publication from monthly to bimonthly. This exposed an ongoing political crisis and a regression to questions of identity, often entrenched in defence of a purer, more traditional and less hybrid thought, unwilling to be contaminated by other cultural influences, even when these were close to those traditionally considered anarchist. Even more significantly, the leading social revolts of this period – the birth of new forms of organisation from below, the Vietnam War, the explosion of movements like those of Provos and the hippies, along with all the new social realities moving in an egalitarian and anti-authoritarian direction – found only marginal space in the pages of *Volontà*. Similarly, the dramatic Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan on 12 December 1969, the strategy of tension, the 'accidental' death of Giuseppe Pinelli, and the period of neo-fascist and state terrorism occupied only minimal space in its pages (See Chapter 1).

The efforts of the editors seem to have been directed more at illustrating the differences between anarchism and Marxism on a theoretical and doctrinal level. In an era in which many left-wing extra-parliamentary groups that adhered to Marxism were active, the journal highlighted the contradictions between doctrinal and authoritarian (Marxist) thought and those movementist

and libertarian components marginally represented in Marxist groups. This was an important endeavour at the time, but certainly not to the extent of diverting attention from the protest and rebellion movements and their libertarian tendencies. Such diffidence towards contestation movements reveals the editors' inability and unreadiness to seize the positive and libertarian aspects emerging from the new situation, and, above all, their dramatic isolation from those experiences.

The journal became marginal even to the Italian anarchist movement: subscriptions fell, and readership declined significantly. It is only with the last issue of 1976 that *Volontà* rose again. A new editorial group completely renewed the journal, reconnecting with its origins. This role fell to members of the anarchist group 'Franco Serantini' of Valdobbiadene (Treviso), who were active in the Gruppi Anarchici Federati (Federated Anarchist Groups, hereafter GAF), and were already experienced at running *A/Rivista Anarchica*,² a monthly anarchist journal, as well as hosting a series of editorial and cultural conferences and seminars that attracted international attention. This shift was completed with the editorial staff passing from Valdobbiadene to the Milan-based Gruppo Anarchico Bandiera Nera (Anarchist Black Flag Group) in 1980, an arrangement that lasted until 1996 (Berti 2016).

A Workshop of Anarchist Research (1980–1996)

From its first issue in 1980, *Volontà* became a quarterly, with a new graphic design and more international contributors. From 1987 there were three issues a year, mainly monographs.

The journal defined itself as 'a workshop of anarchist research' [*laboratorio di ricerche anarchiche*]. *Workshop* because of the liveliness and plurality of approaches, a live process of cultural experimentation driven by intellectual curiosity. *Research* because it favoured exploration over declaration. *Anarchist* insofar as the general frame of reference and identification with anarchist thought remained central.

² *A/Rivista Anarchica* was a monthly anarchist journal founded in Milan in 1971 by anarchist militants close to the GAF, in particular those belonging to the anarchist circle Ponte della Ghisolfà, of which Giuseppe Pinelli was a key figure. After the 1969 bombing of Piazza Fontana and the death of Pinelli, anarchists felt the need to have a coherent platform on which to narrate their counter-histories of the unfolding events. Paolo Finzi (1951–2020), who was a young militant of the circle and considered Pinelli to be his 'anarchist master', was one of the founders of *A/Rivista Anarchica* and acted as the director from 1972 to his death in 2020.

The editorial piece in the first issue of 1980 clearly explained the editorial changeover with respect to the years of decline, and the choice to publish quarterly. It reads:

For many years, V. has been looking out for its own identity. To be sure, not an ideological one: that is and has always been out of the question. It is looking for what we can call an editorial identity, for its role in anarchist publishing . . . Our choice in this regard, which only reinforces the choice of the last two years, is to make it an instrument for updating and deepening anarchist culture. This, in our opinion, means trying to produce a journal that is loyal to the historical-ideological heritage of anarchism and is open to the contributions of contemporary libertarian thought, is enriched by engaging with the most interesting strands of the social sciences. Anarchism is not a glorious but obsolete tradition: it is a live and fertile ensemble of analyses, experiences and intuitions. It is a rich 'capital' of past theoretical and practical labour, which can be put to use only through sustained theoretical and practical labour. (*Volontà* 1980: 3)

The editors believed that Italy was in need of such a journal, one whose core editorial line was the combination of established anarchist theory with libertarian praxis. This challenge was addressed not only to the anarchist movement, but also to a growing cultural space which, perhaps unconsciously, was rediscovering libertarian approaches and anti-authoritarian themes. The lack of a critical space like that offered by *Volontà* – at least in the minds of its editors – would have left an entire heterogeneous, spontaneous and plural movement without any anarchist cultural reference, thus favouring the extension of the Marxist (majority) and liberal-socialist (minority) hegemonies in Italian progressive and left-wing culture. This was the cultural and political project behind the editorial line: an all-out challenge to renew anarchist thought and action. The end of the brief but intense experience of *Interrogations* (an international magazine of anarchist research founded by Louis Mercier Vega, produced in four languages between December 1974 and June 1979) freed the energies of some Italian and international anarchists who found a new space for cultural production and research in *Volontà* (see Chapter 1). The aim was, above all, to keep anarchist thought alive through an honest, open, ideologically unregimented dialogue with those elements of the social sciences which could best be crossbred with an anarchist culture in constant evolution. This was a considerable but necessary effort to guide the transition from a declarative to a pragmatically open anarchism, one that was, at the same time, strongly anchored to its core values (Codello 2009).



Figure 13.1 Covers of *Volontà* designed by Fabio Santin from 1980 to 1985.

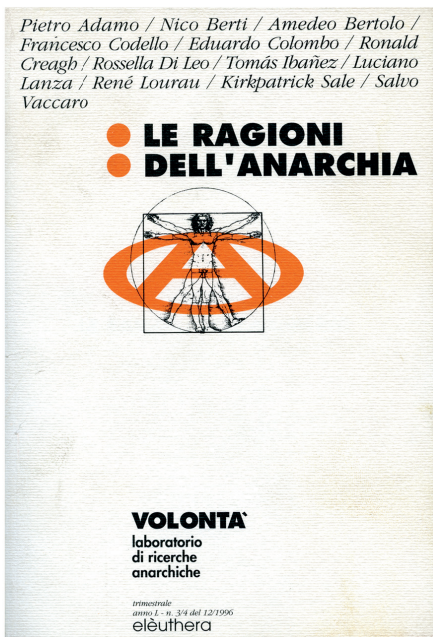
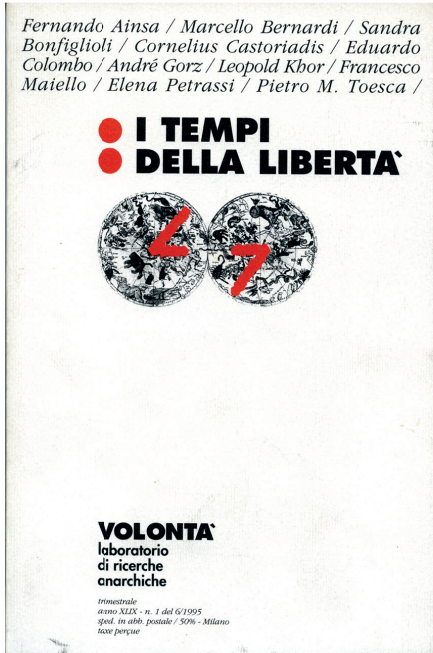
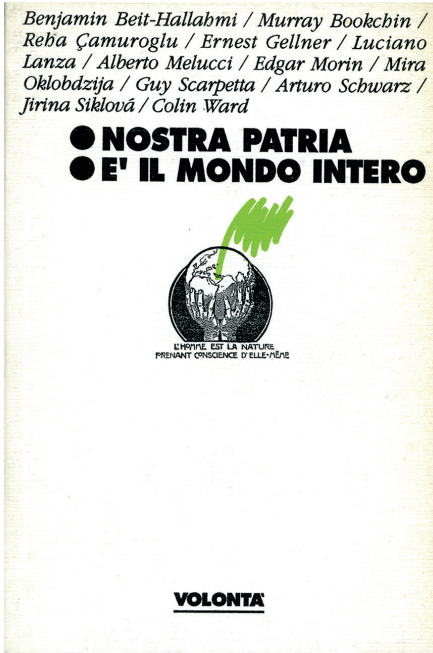


Figure 13.2 Covers of *Volontà* designed by Ferro Piludu from 1991 to 1996. The final issue (bottom right) features Piludu's Da Vinci/anarchy image, which was, for decades, the logo of the CSL.

The tension between the fundamental ideas of anarchism and the necessity of renewal is well synthesised by Nico Berti (1975), who emblematically titled one of his essays in *Interrogations* ‘anarchism in history, yet *against* history’ (see Chapter 11).

The context in which this libertarian research unfolded was characterised by the failure of the recent attempts to transform society and the subsequent triumph of consumer capitalism. The ideas developed were an important attempt to address this new social and cultural situation, after the profound crisis affecting all the protest movements born out of 1968 and the pervasive disillusionment about the real possibility of radical change, affecting even the most engaged militants (see Chapter 2, note 3).

This situation posed several challenges, not least because anarchist research was prone to the risk of indulging in abstract theorising, severed by concrete experimentation. Yet the need to find new ground on which to start the work of a libertarian cultural reconstruction was more urgent than ever. The more traditional wing of the anarchist movement increasingly took refuge in self-identitarianism, often unable to grasp the new challenges that a more complex and hedonistic society poses to radical thought.

Volontà's editors seized the opportunity to privilege a more pragmatic and pluralist libertarian dimension over traditional anarchism – without denying the latter, but rather trying to enhance and deepen it.

The international anarchist conference ‘Venice 1984’ represented a starting point, or rather a *re*-starting point, bringing together the contributions of world anarchism in an extraordinary discussion that marked a decisive passage – also taking place in *Volontà* – between an inward-looking anarchism and a libertarianism anchored in a *new anarchism* (see Bertolo, Chapters 2 and 4).

From Revolution as Event to Revolution as Process: The Social Imaginary and Anarchist Utopias

A priority for the new editorial team was to initiate a genuine and lucid discussion on the concept of revolution without illusions.

The editors were all active anarchist militants and many of them were members of the GAF. The GAF were the most culturally and politically innovative anarchist organisation from the late 1960s until the end of the 1970s. A numerical minority, compared with the other two Italian Federations (FAI and GIA),³

³ The Federazione Anarchica Italiana (Italian Anarchist Federation), or FAI, was founded in Carrara in 1945, significantly inspired by Errico Malatesta's ‘Anarchist Programme’

the GAF developed a new organisational model which was based on the federation of affinity groups rather than a synthesis federation, like the FAI and GIA. This structure strengthened both personal relationships and collective thinking, also two of the defining traits of *Volontà* in this era. In particular, this structure allowed the production of collective thinking and research beyond individual disciplinary boundaries. The shared years of revolutionary militancy forged a community of research that echoed throughout the editorial work.

These anarchist activists had all gone through the most intense period for Italian and European anarchism and, throughout the 1970s, gave birth to numerous initiatives, whether cultural or strictly militant. They were driven by the shared idea that classical anarchism should be renewed, but also the shared belief – not blind faith – that the struggles and agitations they were actively involved in were likely to lead to a revolutionary transformation of society. To be sure, the journal's themes were often the result of a series of interdisciplinary seminars which were organised according to two essential criteria: to be the result of collective thinking, and to focus on some strategic conceptual knots for the renewal of anarchist thought and libertarian action. The defeat and authoritarian/Stalinist drift of the armed struggle, the collapse of the protest movements, and the social hangover caused by the ability of the capitalist system to plagiarise the socio-popular imaginary made it even more difficult – for critical and dissatisfied militants like those of *Volontà* – to be *against* history (that of domination and exploitation) and yet anchored in social reality.

Efforts therefore focused on pursuing a third way between identitarian insularity and pragmatism as an end in itself. Reflecting on the concept and viability of revolution took on a renewed strategic significance. Collective research hence attempted to define the relationship between historical time and revolutionary time, in a context where the social imaginary was increasingly dominated and colonised by a subtler and more insidious authoritarian ideology, and the anarchist movement weakened. The analysis of the rising techno-bureaucracy as a new ruling class, carried out by both the GAF and *Interrogations* (see Chapter 1), needed to be expanded, and the old 'reformism versus revolution' debate of the socialist left (generically understood) was to be overcome.

Volontà hosted numerous interventions around the debate on revolution (not always explicitly, often intersecting with other topics), including a special issue on the topic in 1985 (no. 1). The journal outlined a vision of radical change that is

(see Richards 2015). During the 9th Congress of the FAI in 1965, a split led to the formation of the Gruppi di Iniziativa Anarchica (Groups for Anarchist Initiative), or GIA, who were critical of the anarcho-syndicalist roots of the FAI.

close to Élisée Reclus's (2013) theory of the relationship between revolution and evolution. The idea was to overcome the classical idea of revolution as an *event* in favour of conceiving it as a series of accelerations, interspersed with hidden periods of erosion, that is, more of a *process*, a sustained conflictual dynamic made of an infinite series of small transformations, rather than a cathartic outcome. It is no coincidence that during these years the journal published some fundamental contributions, such as those from Colin Ward, Cornelius Castoriadis, Murray Bookchin, Tomás Ibáñez, Eduardo Colombo, John Clark, Marianne Enckell, Carlos Semprun Maura, Claude Lefort, René Lourau, Pierre Clastres and Noam Chomsky, together with those of Amedeo Bertolo, Nico Berti, Roberto Ambrosoli, Luciano Lanza and Rossella Di Leo, among others. The debate, here always understood as *research*, did not aim at ending the interrogation with a conclusive answer, but rather at producing a continuous form of interrogation, a true embodiment of the collective thought discussed earlier.

A central concern for the editors was the fact that radical change always requires a profound shift in the social and individual imaginary. To this end, various contributions addressed the issue of building a strong anarchist imaginary. This means grasping its utopian function, its radical and subversive force, capable of destabilising established habits and paradigms of domination. As Bertolo (Chapter 8, p. 145) put it:

A deep transformation of basic social structures – a ‘revolution’, whatever one might mean by that – also requires a deep transformation of psychological structures, and both of these transformations can only take place under the pressure of an extremely strong emotional charge, a strong and passionate will for transformation that spreads out across leading social agents . . . but also through more sizeable popular milieu . . . This implies that there has to be a sufficient spread of an imaginary that is not only lucidly rational but also emotionally rich.

From this perspective, it goes without saying that the debate triggered by Murray Bookchin (1995) between social anarchism and lifestyle anarchism was resolved by overcoming a forced contradiction between the two poles of the question. In fact, from a careful reading of its editorial line, *Volontà* was always unwilling to accept overly schematic dual oppositions, trying to suggest and, where possible, practise an open reading of reality. This meant tenaciously advancing the search for a third (fourth, fifth, etc.) way to avoid the reduction of socio-cultural realities to dual oppositions (Hegelian-Marxist after all), instrumental to the logic of domination.

Hence, it is apparent that there is ‘no *single* anarchist system that might represent humanity’s point of arrival, whether near or far. The anarchist utopia contains a *space of freedom* to be explored, a space in which to experiment with infinite and chiefly anarchist social forms, a space of freedom in which to weave diversity and equality in infinite forms’ (see Chapter 8, p. 148). This effort to escape from dominant ideologies, and to free anarchist thought from the influences of Marxism especially, renewed the pragmatic gaze that characterised the anarchism of many of the thinkers published in *Volontà*. To use the words of Colin Ward (1996: 52): ‘The anarchist alternative is that of fragmentation, fission rather than fusion, diversity rather than unity, a mass of societies rather than a mass society.’

To build a libertarian society it was necessary to be aware that

The roots of domination do not lie in *nature* but in culture, not in ‘*things*’ but in the imaginary. Individual and collective rebellion against domination is thus possible only if *one conceives it as possible*, if one conceives to be possible all that the unconscious State and State rationality tell us is impossible, only if the non-place of the libertarian and egalitarian utopia denies the place of hierarchical ideology. (Bertolo, Chapter 8, p. 150)

To overturn the social imaginary in an anti-authoritarian direction means founding a subversive, radically transformative and instituting imaginary.

Utopia lives entirely in the break it establishes with what exists. When utopia enters historical time, it challenges the whole political institutionalisation at place, whose existence is denied by the very possibility of a utopian alterity. At that moment, such a break is called revolution. But revolution is not the end of history, it is only a moment of its continuity in which a qualitative change disrupts social institutions. (translated from Colombo 1981: 29)

Change, according to the analyses published in *Volontà*, is inevitably revolutionary when it goes in a libertarian and non-authoritarian direction. It is radically different from the existent, it is gradual, it is cultural because it threatens established habits and certainties, but it is also social and concrete because it needs continual ruptures, both symbolic and factual.

Radical transformation is possible only with the occurrence of an anomalous situation that entails a succession of accelerated qualitative transformations, which are able to anaesthetise the reproduction of fear of freedom and radically alter the collective imaginary. (translated from Lanza 1981: 15)

The debate went on incessantly, as the problem of revolution was a fundamental historical and ideological point in this historical phase of anarchism in Italy and beyond. The divide deepened between those concerned with a rediscovery of the founding authors of anarchist thought and important concrete experiences (e.g. the Spanish Revolution of 1936) and those advocating for a gradual but more radical change and break with tradition.

This discussion endured because the style of confrontation was characterised by a dialogic (and not dialectical) effort. The ‘I win, you lose’ logic is replaced by a ‘workshop of anarchist research’.

The Meaning of Domination and the Problem of Freedom: Beyond Democracy

Throughout the 1980s the journal was concerned with the anarchist definition of the concepts of authority, power and domination, how these terms were embodied in the social, political, cultural, economic and relational reality, how they were expressed, and most of all: what is anarchist freedom? How is it different from its Marxist and liberal conceptualisations?

In 1983, two special issues of *Volontà* (nos. 2 and 3) were devoted to the problem of Power and its implications for anarchist theory. Firstly, conceptual clarity was considered indispensable from an epistemological point of view. In an illuminating essay, Amedeo Bertolo distinguishes between authority, power and domination and their meanings in light of anarchist interpretation (see Chapter 4). Authority and power have two different meanings: authority can be a freely recognised competence (authoritativeness), as opposed to a role determined by an established hierarchy; power as ‘power to do’ (an expression of anarchist freedom), as opposed to ‘power to make others do’, that is, ‘domination’ (the institutionalised exercise of force). This distinction removes any suspicion of ‘conceptual naivety’, often unjustly attributed to anarchism.

The unequal possession of power is the basis of any authoritarian society. Domination intersects both the right and the left, and only anarchism can break this pattern of interpersonal, economic, political, cultural and social relationships. The polysemy of power is the neutral border between freedom and domination. In fact, ‘being able to do’ – ‘power to do, ability to do’ (*poter fare*) – is an expression of extreme freedom (not just individual freedom, but social freedom), but ‘power to make others do’ (*poter far fare*) is the violent exercise of privilege and is, therefore, the denial of freedom in that it is the antithesis of equality (see Bertolo, Chapter 4). Anarchy does not mean anomie, but a conscious and responsible choice of freely defined norms, accepted and modifiable at any time.

This is not an abstract idea of dissent but guarantees the conditions in which it is possible to realise alternatives according to the pluralistic conception of social life that characterises this kind of anarchism. It should be remembered that the constant point of reference of the journal's editors was the Bakuninian conception of freedom, according to which my freedom does not end where yours begins (the liberal conception), but my freedom cannot be fulfilled if you are not equally free (anarchist social freedom).⁴

Freedom in its eternal struggle against domination can concretely express itself only if we are to take seriously the problem of 'voluntary servitude', dramatically pervasive in contemporary society.⁵ Eduardo Colombo analysed the general paradigm of obedience, regarded as the precondition of the existence and reproducibility of domination. Once this is assimilated into the collective imaginary, a 'voluntary' servitude governs the actions of individuals and the whole of society, so that understanding the mechanisms through which obedience and passivity penetrate human beings becomes strategically important. Colombo (1983: 81), through his psychoanalytic training, analysed the 'constitution of power at the symbolic level of significance and its phantasmal and institutional reproduction'. John Clark (1994) and Eugène Enriquez (1980) focused on the same topic, with different viewpoints, but still aiming to dig into the foundations on which domination is based and obedience is exercised. Rossella Di Leo (see Chapter 10) introduced another foundational aspect of power and domination, namely that expressed in gender relations. Di Leo's anthropological gaze leads her to reject mainstream feminism's monocausal explanations to focus on a specific relation of domination (sexual asymmetry) as paradigmatic of overarching structures of authoritarian relationships more broadly.

Finally, we should note the analysis of Tomás Ibáñez (see Chapter 3). Drawing from Michel Foucault, he argues that a society without power cannot exist. It is not possible to have an anomic community devoid of social ties and without decision-making processes that are valid for everyone. It is therefore necessary

⁴ Codello is referencing Bakunin's (1980: 237) declaration in the early 1870s that 'I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free'.

⁵ The idea of 'voluntary servitude' is taken from Étienne de La Boétie's *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*. Published clandestinely in sixteenth-century France, it focuses on the puzzle of how and why the mass of people acquiesce to political domination when the authority of rulers is reliant only on the complicity of the ruled. Whilst clearly foreshadowing later anarchist ideas, the political legacy of La Boétie's *Discourse* is more ambivalent; the most easily available edition today, for example, is available courtesy of the Mises Institute, a bastion of 'free' market libertarianism and vulgar neoconservatism.

to develop a libertarian conception of power, since this intersects horizontal relationships as well as (obviously) vertical ones. Ibáñez refers here to power as a concrete and guaranteed expression of doing (being able to do), while he reiterates his radical opposition to the metamorphosis of this power into domination (power to make others do).

Anarchism is doomed to impotence if it does not define power as a set of rules freely produced and accepted by all, including the decision-making process and its application. In this debate, an emphasis on anarchist freedom as freedom *of* rather than freedom *from* prevails. This means to choose the positive (of experimental concreteness) over the negative. There is wide agreement over the limitations attached to the liberal stance on the division of power: the matter is not about reducing and balancing power, but rather transforming it (or, better, ending its transformation into domination).*

The editorial team of *Volontà* knew all too well that an engagement with the key relationship between the political and the social, and the limits of democracy, was necessary at this point. An original and innovative approach to these themes could highlight some unresolved issues in the anarchist vulgate too. Such was the challenge posed by Nico Berti (1989), who argued that politics is a science and practice that manages the tensions produced by reality in favour of those who engage in it. No society, even a libertarian one, can ignore politics, and classical anarchism, according to Berti, has not been able to produce its own politics. In condemning the historical forms of the political, anarchism has limited itself to considering the social as its only legitimate field. By denying politics, because of an inability to create its own, anarchist thought and practice had surrendered to impotence. Berti draws from theory – published in *Volontà* – developed by Cornelius Castoriadis (1989), Miguel Abensour (1989), Claude Lefort (1989), Thom Holterman (1987) and Alain Thévenet (1994), all attempting in different ways to incorporate the political into the social. In his own later work, Berti further explores the idea that classical anarchist thought neutralises the role of politics through the social. As the history of anarchist socialism shows, this resulted in all-round failure and the marginalisation of anarchism. To overcome this situation, anarchism must develop its own political theory and praxis. What could a political theory of post-classical anarchism look like? What are the implications and contradictions that this entails? This was the great challenge for everyone involved.

* *Volontà* also dedicated two monographic issues to the theme of freedom: *I tempi della libertà*, *Volontà*, Milan, 1995, n. 1, and *I due volti della libertà*, *Volontà*, Milan, 1995, n. 4.

The initial answers came from Colombo (1989) and Bookchin (1989); the first recognised that the specificity of politics lies in its intentionality and self-referentiality. However, as the French Revolution showed, the political and the social cannot be separated. The political demand of 1789 and the social demand of 1793 could not be met in a revolutionary continuum. On the other hand, Bookchin believes that what is commonly referred to as politics is nothing more than a technology of State organisation. However, politics does not exhaust itself in this function: on the contrary, its physical milieu has almost always been the city. It is in the perennial conflict between the city (understood as a community) and the State that we can find clues on how to rebuild social politics.

At this point, the discussion inevitably turns to attempts to sketch a political vision of anarchism by critiquing actual democracy and identifying alternative libertarian ways of organising social life.

Anarchist thinkers have always denounced the fallacy (in terms of true freedom and authentic equality) of the democratic system. Classical anarchist thinkers (from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to Errico Malatesta) emphasised that anarchy and democracy were different and, in some respects, irreconcilable concepts. This is hardly surprising in the period spanning the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century (even earlier in the United States). The rise of dictatorships across Europe, starting with Fascism and Nazism, highlighted the need to revisit the anarchy/democracy divide and to better understand the evolution of democracy under conditions of globalisation and financial capitalism (see Codello 2015). *Volontà* devotes several articles and special issues to these themes, grappling with the question of whether anarchism is democratic or not. According to the editors, the answer could only be twofold: anarchism encompasses democracy yet wants to overcome it. The anarchist proposal for social organisation supersedes the rules of democracy; it opens up a space beyond the political, to be understood as an autonomous category from the social.

According to Bertolo (translated from 1994: 27):

democracy and anarchy are not reducible to one another but (under certain conditions) neither are they antithetical, that anarchy is both the most complete form of democracy but also its irreducible exceedance . . . A quantitative and qualitative beyond . . . Thus, anarchists' political conception is, must be, more democracy, as well as something else. If not, it is a within [rather than a beyond]. To be sure, anarchists believe that it is both more and different . . . Anarchy can be conceived as an extreme form of democracy, as well as a different form of constructing the political space. Perhaps, even as something lying beyond the political space itself.

Tomás Ibáñez poses the interesting question: when we talk about democracy, are we referring to normative or actual democracy? ‘Actual democracy does not respect any of the principles of normative democracy, which, after all, constitutes a reasonable, if not acceptable model’ (translated from Ibáñez 1994: 66). The same applies to anarchism, so what matters is to measure its degree of concreteness and applicability and to develop robust critical and self-critical thinking. Other contributions grasped the deeper meaning of this debate in the comparative judgement of democratic and totalitarian regimes, recognising liberal democracy as ‘the lesser evil’, without renouncing the idea of a ‘beyond’ democracy [‘Democracy and Beyond’ is the title of the 1994 issue of *Volontà*]. However, an unsettling concern emerged: such an observation could obliterate the revolutionary nature of anarchism, and the anarchist identity could be lost. Here identity returns to the fore, although not explicitly, representing a constant challenge for the journal’s cultural project, that is, to renew anarchist thought without disavowing its difference from both liberalism and Marxism (see, for example, La Torre 1980; Alemany 1981, 1982; Chomsky 1982; Di Leo (Chapter 12); Clark 1994; Vaccaro 1994).

Following the debate on the relationship between democracy, liberalism and anarchist thought, *Volontà* published a series of articles aimed at outlining some guidelines for anarchist political thought. In those years, the editorial team was characterised by a more pragmatic perspective, aimed at thinking through a gradualist and experimental anarchism. The team was, for the most part, made of the same people who had organised a meeting to mark the centenary of Bakunin’s death in 1976, the ‘International Conference of Studies on the New Masters’ in 1978 (see Chapter 1; Codello 1979; Venza 1979), and the conference on autogestion and its theoretical and practical implications in 1979.

Political anarchism can be defined by autogestion. But this is only one of its possible forms. Federalism, libertarian municipalism and direct democracy give substance both to the concept of autogestion and to the anarchist political perspective. Through the analysis and enhancement of these concepts, the journal took an experimental and innovative turn with respect to the traditional and classic visions of anarchism.*

Important in this sense were the contributions of Murray Bookchin and João Freire. Freire took a pragmatic and experimental direction, theorising proper

* See, in particular, issue 3 of *Volontà* in 1989, *Autogestione. Utopia riformista o strategia rivoluzionaria?* [Autogestion: Reformist utopia or revolutionary strategy?], which was dedicated to historical and contemporary experiences of libertarian social organisation.

stages in a path of gradualist change in order to find immediate and viable answers for a possible anarchist politics. He acknowledges that the absence of an imposed authority does not necessarily lead to the affirmation of authentic libertarian values. The idea of a libertarian society must be developed bearing in mind that conflict cannot be eliminated, but it can be regulated through constant negotiation via the method of consensus. Society is to be designed in a highly organised and participatory fashion, regulated by agreements and contracts with a variety of protagonists, levels and articulations, not by general, abstract or imposed laws. This programme must be conceived within a framework of regulatory principles that enhance autonomy over heteronomy, cooperation over competition, guided by strong values such as freedom and solidarity in close relation to one another. Libertarian self-organisation and decision-making (indispensable in any society) inevitably also include delegation, which must in turn be characterised by revocability, effective and real control, and limited and specific mandates. The community dimension is key for libertarian social organisation: beyond a certain dimension, no anti-authoritarian organisation is possible. Ultimately, according to Freire, ‘rather than expanding forms of counter-powers, which limit the field of action of institutional powers, it is a question of fuelling anti-power processes that strengthen and reinforce societal logic against the logic of the state’ (translated from Freire 1983: 21). In various contributions, Bookchin introduced the ideas of communitarianism, direct democracy, federalism and libertarian municipalism, all organisational models closely consistent with an ecological and libertarian society (see Bookchin 1987, 1991). The journal managed to merge these issues with a properly anarchist internationalist dimension.*

Bookchin stressed the role of communitarianism as an alternative to statism. In his opinion, anarchists should focus on concrete action on the ground, rather than engaging with sterile, generic protests against the State. Only in this way can new social configurations emerge as alternatives to the dominant system. Thus, federalism, municipalism, autogestion and solutions that favour direct and participatory action could constitute the political path of a renewed anarchism. To overcome the hierarchical logic of statism and centralisation, it is necessary to give life to concrete forms of experimentation that can be defined as direct democracy. Bookchin’s ideas are well known, and do not need further

* Such a dimension is well captured by the title chosen for the 1990 *Volontà*, issues 2–3, devoted to these themes: *Nostra patria è il mondo intero* [Our country is the entire world], a refrain taken from the anarchist song written by the anarchist Pietro Gori (1865–1911) in 1895.

discussion here. It suffices to say that it was *Volontà* that introduced the thought of the American libertarian ecologist to Italy in the early 1990s.

From Theory to Praxis

Classic themes and arguments around human and social life found ample space in many issues of *Volontà* and stimulated wide-ranging research to cross-contaminate anarchist ideas with libertarian theories and experiences from different disciplinary fields. The editors constantly sought inspiration, questions, ideas and validation in order to test anarchist ideas through praxis and offer a truly plural and innovative viewpoint.

A case in point is the attention given to economics, an unusual topic for anarchist theory. Anarchism (or rather *anarchisms*) had classically dealt with the economic issue by dividing itself between those who saw communism as the most suitable option for an anarchist society, those who deemed collectivism and mutualism more suitable to guarantee individual freedom and social sharing, and those who accepted the utility of guaranteeing individual possession only so long as it avoided any form of exploitation. Communism, collectivism, mutualism and libertarian individualism (certainly not anarcho-capitalism) have always been thought of as regulating principles of a libertarian economy. With this understanding, and the firm belief that these strategies must all be scrutinised and not resolved by a one-fits-all solution, *Volontà* disrupted the dominant debate and paved the way for new critiques and ways of understanding the economic.

The most interesting and innovative contributions came from Luciano Lanza (see Chapters 6 and 7 in this volume), who made a Herculean effort to escape the dualism of liberalism-communism, envisaging a libertarian society that combined individual freedom and a 'libertarian market' with genuine equality of living conditions, while guaranteeing a form of 'entrepreneurship' without exploitation.

Lanza argues that the economy is a theoretical and practical manifestation of domination in its historically determined forms, and therefore does not have its own foundational values, nor its own related representation of humanity and the world. As opposed to domination, present in every known society, the economic (understood as a world in itself, as an objective reality, as a science that responds to itself) can be found in Western societies starting from a very specific point in history. Yet, the economic is a representation of reality that has profoundly changed the social imaginary, and hence society. It is a myth that filled an historical social void determining, as a signifier, the actions of human

beings. Although it appears as an immortal myth, it is actually fragile and, as such, can be modified. In fact,

bigger or smaller groups of producer-consumers do not compete with the capitalist market, but become independent by creating non-economic [*a-economiche*] logics, which can lead to significant disruptions because they make temporary autonomous zones visible. Such zones abide to a new logic that no longer foresees groups of producers-consumers, but something different, yet to be included in the vocabulary of the economic. (translated from Lanza 1996: 240)

The economic, too, is therefore nothing more than a perception of reality, which in turn creates the reality we live in. A libertarian society is characterised by the refusal to maintain an autonomous economic sphere, as the economic must not have its own specific scope but must rather conform to other institutions (of kinship, community, etc.). Escaping the economic means escaping current society, which is *the* economic society. The dominant rationality is an economic one, encompassing all, including the political. The aim is difficult but not impossible: to promote a society which no longer pivots around economic values, where the economy is a means for human life, not its ultimate end. Within this framework, it is clear that the economic has a plurality of forms, all linked to the specific context of the communities in which they develop. Anarchism therefore moves 'beyond the economic' (Chapter 7) while proclaiming its harmfulness.

These topics were vividly debated in *Volontà*, whose pages hosted a variety of seminal contributions for which thinking of a society 'beyond the economic' meant to also address its eco-compatibility. Ecology became a crucial issue for *Volontà's* editors at a time when environmental theories featured in the political debate but their libertarian dimension was underexplored. The main ideas discussed in the journal had Murray Bookchin's anarchist social ecology as a key point of reference.

Several of Bookchin's articles were published in *Volontà* between 1980 and 1994, signalling the need to complement classical anarchist thought (especially that of Reclus and Kropotkin) with a new ecological vision able to combine the environmentalist and libertarian dimensions, the inseparable link between ecology and libertarian social organisation. An alternative way of thinking emerged, distinct from both institutionalised/reformist Green parties and deep ecology's fundamentalism. Such thinking was guided by the idea that real ecological change can only be achieved through radical transformation in power relations and social inequalities.

Various authors contributed to the debate with a pluralist outlook (John Clark, Roberto Ambrosoli, Paul Feyerabend, Janet Biehl, Franco La Cecla, Jean Baudrillard and Wolfgang Sachs, to mention a few).^{*} A debate on social ecology could not be separated from a discussion on human nature, and the relationship between culture and nature. Readers were offered perspectives rejecting both human nature as essence (essentialism) and culture as something existing outside (separable from) its relationship with nature.

The relationship between universalism and relativism, the profound nature of epistemology (Morin and Laborit 1982), the meaning and limits of science, and the dangers of fundamentalism in every area of life and social thought (Ambrosoli 1982) were also vividly discussed.

Volontà also paid particular attention to concrete issues, by narrating historical and contemporary experimentations, and by getting back to thinkers – not only anarchists – whose insights could lead to actual libertarian development. So, the city, housing, urban planning and social geography were discussed in important contributions which made the journal a privileged, and in some respects unique, place for debate at the European level.^{**}

The same can be said for libertarian education and the critique of traditional school systems. Themes that ran through the anarchist tradition were developed by combining classical authors' fundamental questions with analyses and narration of contemporary experiences on the ground.^{***} Last but not least, several articles and issues were devoted to gender and libertarian feminism.^{****}

^{*} Two special issues appeared on the topic of ecology and anarchism: *Pensare l'ecologia* in 1987 (nos. 2–3) and *Pornoecologia: la natura e la sua immagine* in 1992 (no. 2).

^{**} See, for example, issue no. 2 of *Volontà* in 1986, which appeared under the title 'The Idea of Living' (*L'idea di abitare*). Nos. 1–2 in 1989 included essays by Ivan Illich, Colin Ward, John Turner and Giancarlo De Carlo; no. 4 in 1992 was titled 'Boundless Geography' (*Geografia senza confini*), with contributions from Colin Ward and Claude Raffestin especially; nos. 2–3 in 1995, 'The City Is Naked' (*La città è nuda*), featured essays by Colin Ward, Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio, Franco Bunčuga and Pietro M. Toesca.

^{***} See, for example, 'Education and Freedom' (*Educazione e libertà*), in issue no. 1, 1987; 'The Child between Authority and Freedom' (*Il bambino fra autorità e Libertà*) in issue no. 3, 1993 (see, in particular, the contributions by Ivan Illich, Marcello Bernardi and Lamberto Borghi); and Codello (1996) on libertarian education.

^{****} See, for example, the various articles in no. 4, 1982; no. 1, 1983; nos. 1–2, 1988 (especially the various essays by Rossella Di Leo and Marianne Enckell).

Reasons for Anarchy: The Anarchism of *Volontà*

It is not possible here to do justice to the variety of issues covered by the journal in these crucial years.* We can certainly say that *Volontà* made a difference by moving freely between topics, ideas, experiments and philosophies, always casting a critical eye on Power. This may seem obvious for an anarchist journal, but it is less so when we consider the multiplicity of themes that were explored in a pragmatic way without ever losing their 'anarchist compass'.

The last issue of *Volontà* appeared in 1996, marking fifty years of the journal's publication, and bore the emblematic title 'The Reasons for Anarchy'. Emblematic because, at the end of the journal's rounded exploration of libertarian culture, the reasons for thinking as anarchists clearly emerge. A long journey in several directions that did not mark out a final path, without a sense of conclusion or return. It was a 'disoriented' journey that had radically challenged many certainties while preserving all that remained valid. It was a cultural operation also made up of life, experimentation, initiatives, struggles; a true artisan workshop of remarkable finesse.

In its pages we can find insights and choices that may be taken for granted by (some of) today's anarchists but were anything but obvious at the time. *Volontà*'s anarchism anticipated a series of important questions and strategic themes that would become key to anarchist thought. But even more importantly, the journal was an important tussle within a broader cultural and political strategy that was being explored by Italian and international anarchist militants.

This extraordinary cultural operation was concerned with the unity of thought and action, reasoning and feeling, ethics and secularism. *Volontà* combined international collaborations and multidisciplinary with a plurality of interpretations, research and debates. These were the elements of an authentic artisan workshop, which enhanced collective thinking and established a close link between social anarchism and anarchism as an existential practice (or, as Bookchin would put it, a 'lifestyle'). At a time when the anarchist movement was

* To give you a flavour of this, here are the titles of some of the monographic issues not mentioned: 'The Libertarian Dimension of 1968' (*La dimensione libertaria del Sessantotto*) in 1988, no. 3; 'Un/making Art' (*Dis/fare l'arte*) in 1988, no. 4; 'Drugs: The Vice of Prohibiting' (*Droga: il vizio di proibire*) in 1991, no. 1; 'Notes of Revolt' (*Note di rivolta*) in 1993, nos. 1–2; *Penne all'arrabbiata* in 1993, nos. 3–4; 'Crime and Punishment' (*Delitto e castigo*) in 1994, no. 1; 'Unveiled Fundamentalisms' (*Fondamentalismi senza veli*) in 1996, no. 1; 'Spain, 1936: Utopia Is History' (*Spagna 1936: l'utopia è storia*) in 1996, no. 2. There was even an issue dedicated to psychoanalysis (1985, no. 2)!

in crisis, in which there was a high degree of cultural and social disorientation, the journal was able to hold a straight course while immersing itself in a problematic and contradictory reality.

In those difficult years, *Volontà* gave priority to the libertarian, anti-authoritarian dimensions of relational and social living, giving new lifeblood to anarchist thought and allowing it to test the coherence of its utopian (but indispensable) vision. *Volontà*'s last issue took stock of its publishing experience in a collection of essays that tried once again to reaffirm, after years of research, the validity of collective anarchist thinking and libertarian social practices. It was clear to the editors that anarchist thought, given up for dead many times, showed an unsuspected vitality. Indeed, it influenced numerous sectors of culture and social life, at times unknowingly, in other circumstances explicitly.

The experience and the cultural project of *Volontà* has continued to animate many initiatives and triggered further innovative research. Its legacy lives through the work of the CSL and its publishing house, elèuthera, and the Ateneo degli Imperfetti [University of the Imperfects] in Marghera (Venice). It is a political project that envisages a new social organisation that moves from the simple to the complex without the need for hierarchical institutions, capable of representing an adequate alternative to the mortal crisis of Marxism and the deadly spread of liberalism.

Volontà, as the expression of an Italian anarchist editorial and political group, understood before others that 1968 and 1969 had posed challenging, crucial questions to both theory and practice, thus representing a new opportunity to be seized for the renewal of anarchist thought. The choice of establishing a dialogue with the broader libertarian fringe, as materially embodied in behaviours, relationships, experiences, thoughts and reflections, allowed the journal to radically innovate the classic dimension of anarchist theory and to devise a new expression of anarchism itself.

Above all, *Volontà* understood the fundamental importance of international research. Anarchism is by vocation international and internationalist; it can never be enclosed in a provincial and self-referential dimension, unless it wants to perish.

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