Occult Origins
Hakim Bey's Ontological Post-Anarchism

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ABSTRACT

Convention concerning the beginning of Post-anarchist discourse locates its origin in Hakim Bey's work in the 1980s; however, no commentator has sufficiently analyzed the thoroughly spiritualized anarchism upon which it is based, termed "Ontological Anarchism," nor the group that promoted it, the Association of Ontological Anarchism. This article draws attention to the ways in which the interface between a starkly postmodern form of esotericism called Chaos Magick and the anarchist tradition produced Ontological Anarchism, and, further, to the implications of this hybridity on the historiography of Post-anarchism.

KEYWORDS

post-anarchism, chaos magick, Hakim Bey, zines, discordianism

INTRODUCTION

Peter Lamborn Wilson once lightheartedly lamented, "Hakim Bey is more popular than I am" (Knight, 2012: 74). What makes this comment humorous is that Hakim Bey is a *nom de plume* for Wilson. What makes this comment *noteworthy* is that Wilson used this *nom de plume* to initiate one of the most innovative developments in the history of twentieth century anarchism. This development, which he termed Post-Anarchism Anarchy (now called Post-anarchism), arose from the confluence of esotericism and anarchism in the 1980s zine network.[1] Thus, in order to under-

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[1] The category of esotericism should be understood not as a cluster of historically linked occult or hermetic phenomena but rather as an instrument for historians to better understand marginalized spiritual currents

stand the origins of Post-anarchism we must locate it in the context of Bey's work and the specific audience for which he was writing.

While convention concerning the origin of Post-anarchism states that it began in Bey's work in the 1980s (Call, 2010: 10; Newman 2010: 51, 71n.8), no commentator has sufficiently analyzed the thoroughly spiritualized anarchism upon which it is based, termed Ontological Anarchism, nor the group that promoted it, the Association of Ontological Anarchism (AOA henceforth).[2] The aim of this article is to draw attention to the ways in which the interface between a starkly postmodern form of esotericism called Chaos Magick and the anarchist tradition produced Ontological Anarchism, and, further, the implications of this hybridity on the historiography of Post-anarchism.[3] To this end, three related undercurrents run through this article. The first concerns the identification of primary sources with regards to Wilson/Bey and Ontological Anarchism. The second links these esoteric sources to a gap in scholarship on the prominence of esotericism within early Post-anarchist discourse, i.e., Bey's Ontological Anarchism. The third concerns Lewis Call's convincing argument concerning the role of "the Nietzsche effect" in laying the foundation for Post-anarchism (as mention is made throughout the article of Nietzsche's strong influence on the esoteric discourses that predate as well as prefigure Bey's Post-anarchist Ontological Anarchism).[4] The conclusions drawn are likewise

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which may or may not be related to occultism or hermeticism. See Hanegraaff, 2012 and fn.5.

[2] The title of Leonard Williams's article "Hakim Bey and Ontological Anarchism" suggests that it would have provided some insight into this topic; however, in failing to grasp the spiritual context of Bey's use of Chaos as ontology, the article ends up mistaking Ontological Anarchism for an "artistic practice" and in so doing fails to elucidate Bey's innovative refashioning of anarchism. See Williams, 2010.

[3] The term magick was coined by British occultist Aleister Crowley to separate his spiritual system and writings from the so-called superstitious magic of the occultists whom he considered his competitors. The fact that his term has persisted to this day, as evidenced by the Chaos Magick discourse, testifies to the continued relevance of his approach to spiritual and religious texts and practices. See Crowley, 1992. For an account of Crowley's lasting influence see Bogdan & Starr (eds.), 2012.

[4] Quoting Keith Ansell-Pearson, Call describes "the Nietzsche effect" as the consensus opinion amongst scholars that the most fertile aspect of Nietzsche's work is not so much its content but how its performative

threefold: first, that the history of Post-anarchism cannot be written without considering the contribution of occultism; second, that Bey's work itself will remain misunderstood if the esoteric themes that it addressed, and physical mediums through which it first appeared, remain unexamined; third, through acknowledging the esoteric foundation of Bey's Ontological Anarchism, an even earlier form of Nietzsche-inspired, anarcho-occultism called Discordianism can be read into the multiplicity of discourses that compose the pre-history of Post-anarchism.[5]

At the heart of this article is the correction of an inaccuracy, namely, that Bey's 1991 text, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (hereafter *TAZ*) published by Autonomedia constitutes the origin of Post-anarchist discourse. This is not to deny the centrality of the texts that compose the book *TAZ*, but rather to draw attention to the fact that *TAZ* is *an anthology of previously published works.* Mistakenly identifying the origins of Ontological Anarchism in *TAZ* effectively neglects the original primary sources which first introduced Bey's idea of Ontological Anarchism, as well as the milieu in which it was initially, developed, critiqued, and revised. The glossy publication produced by Autonomedia in 1991 entitled *TAZ* does not represent the origin of Ontological Anarchism; rather, it is a redacted volume assembled to popularize Bey's work. In order to illustrate the implications of the failure to recognize *TAZ*'s provenance, this article focuses on the Chaos Magick milieu in which Bey first developed Ontological Anarchism.

The *TAZ* text itself is broken into three sections which correspond to three distinct works composed by Bey at various times. The first section of the book is the verbatim reproduction of a prose-poetry zine entitled *Chaos: The Broadsheets of Ontological Anarchy*, first published in 1985. The most rigorous development of Ontological Anarchism followed after the publication of *Chaos* in a number of zines, but most regularly as a series of letters and essays in a Chaos Magick zine from the years 1986–1988. These letters and essays would come to be collected as the second and largest section of *TAZ* and were titled *Communiqués of the Association for Ontological Anarchy*. The essential aspect of this devel-

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quality deconstructs the logocentric bias of Western thought and reason. See Call, 2001: 51–52.

[5] Debate continues to rage over how to define "occultism" with Marco Pasi's historiographic definition standing out as the most workable. See Pasi, 2012; Hanegraaff, Brach, Faivre, & van den Broek, 2005: 884–889; Hanegraaff: 2012.

opment, as will be shown, concerns the way in which the communiqués were written largely in response to issues prominent in the anarcho-queer-magickal milieu, which heralded Bey's *Chaos* as essential reading for the nascent Chaos Magick movement. The last section of *TAZ* is a collection of writings which focus on the formation of moments where Ontological Anarchism has flourish, termed Temporary Autonomous Zones, and from whence the title of the book is derived. As will be made clear in what follows, *TAZ* was not the primary source from which Post-anarchism originated, and thus, much stands to be gained by both subverting this monolithic origin point and reasserting the radical hybridity of its origins for historians of Post-anarchism and esotericism alike.

As Bey's writings on Ontological Anarchism first appeared in his zine *Chaos*, and developed into "communiqués" published in a number of influential zines, the first section focuses on setting Ontological Anarchism within what Bob Black termed the "marginal milieu" and, in particular, clarifying its relationship to Joel Biroco's influential Chaos Magick zine *Kaos* (Black, 1994). The second section offers an in-depth description of Bey's explicitly Nietzschean reading of Chaos and how this functioned as the basis of Ontological Anarchism. The conclusion takes up the significance of citing Ontological Anarchism as the origin of Post-anarchism. Essentially, it will be argued that Bey's role in the formation of Post-anarchism obliges scholars to recognize why he, and others, perceived natural affinities between anarchism and esotericism. Finally, brief mention is made of a slightly earlier syncretism of Chaos ontology, Nietzschean philosophy, esotericism, and anarchism termed Discordianism, which heavily influenced Bey's formulation of Ontological Anarchism.[6] It will be argued that the inclusion of Discordianism in the early historiography of Post-anarchism will lead scholars to recognize how the origins of Post-anarchism in an occult milieu is not simply an oddity or an aberration, but representative of a grossly underappreciated historical alliance between anarchism and esotericism beginning from the late 1950s onward.

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[6] Just as scholars of Post-anarchism have neglected to explore the sources anthologized within *TAZ*, so too have scholars of Discordianism failed to examine its origins in the zine scene. Carole Cusack's work on Discordianism exemplifies this unfortunate trend. See Cusack, 2010 and ibid, 2011.

DISCURSIVE TRANSFERS "BENEATH THE UNDERGROUND"

> *In olden days I was a Prophet, today I am a rabble-rouser.*
> Joel Biroco, "Renegade"

Today, it is no secret that Wilson and Bey are the same individual. However, when Bey's *Chaos* and the AOA communiqués were printed in the mid-1980s zine network, this secret was closely guarded.[7] Similarly, while the AOA's greatest asset was the forceful eloquence of the provocations issued by its only public representative, Bey, the mystery concerning its size and militancy lent it an undeniable mystique. In hindsight, Bey seems to have been its only official member; yet, as mentioned he too was a mystery at that time. The most plausible explanation as to why Wilson adopted his pseudonym after his return from Iran following the 1979 revolution, was so that he could safeguard the respectability of his academic work which he continued to be publish under the name Wilson. As Bey, Wilson's writings were unapologetically radical in both style and content. Understanding the difference between the once-separate identities of Wilson and Bey is the key to understanding how Ontological Anarchism was formed. While Wilson was an independent, Traditionalist scholar of Islam and Persian poetry, Bey, the prolific anarcho-mystic and man-boy-love propagandist, was a prime mover in a vibrant, "sub-underground" known as the "zine scene" that flourished in North America and the UK from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s.[8] This milieu can most accurately be described as a network of political, sexual, and spiritual non-conformists, all of whom communicated through small-circulation hand-made magazines called fanzines, abbreviated to zines, as well as taped letters, self-recorded music, mail-art, and "comix" sent through the mail. Named after the company that allowed for the cheap production of these publications, xerography established itself as the central pivot of this outsider milieu. Aside from a general, but by no means totalizing acceptance of anti-authoritarianism and the rejection of censor-

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[7] This is exemplified in the video recording of Joseph Matheny's "T.A.Z." event that featured Robert Anton Wilson and Hakim Bey as speakers. Whereas Robert Anton Wilson's part was filmed with only minimal distortion effects, Wilson, performing as Bey, is blurred out almost entirely with the use of psychedelic colors and patterns in the video (Matheny, 1993).

[8] For a detailed overview of the Traditionalist context where Wilson began his academic writing career see Sedgwick, 2004: 147–160, and Versluis, 2010.

ship, those who participated in this network were anything but homogeneous in taste, opinion, and areas of interest (Black, 1994: 4). As an embedded authority, Bob Black described the milieu stating: "abhorrent topics, from space colonization to Holocaust Revisionism, are taken in stride" and it was not uncommon to have ads for Situationist or queer zines in magick publications and vice versa (Black, 1994: 6).

Both thematically and aesthetically, labels like punk, queer, anarchist, and magick do more to misrepresent the material within the zines than categorize them, as each of these elements were routinely reconfigured in any number of ways throughout the network. This is clearly true for Chaos Magick publications like *Salvation Army* and *Kaos*, both of which were embraced by both anarcho-queer individuals disenfranchised with what they saw as the commodification and banalization of homosexuality as a fixed identity, and anarchists whose esoteric worldviews ran afoul of their atheist materialist comrades.[9] Certainly, the zine scene was an exceptionally fecund network in regards to the cross-pollination of radical politics, illegal sexualities, and esotericism, and as such stands as "an undiscovered continent" of primary source materials for scholars of contemporary anarchism, cultural studies, and esotericism (Wobensmith, 2012).

The Acknowledgments page of *TAZ* indicates the extent to which vastly different discourses overlapped in the rhizomatic zine network, which inspired and disseminated the writings that would be collected as *Communiqués of Ontological Anarchism.* The list of publications on the Acknowledgments page reads as a who's who of the most influential zines in the network. Of particular note is Joel Biroco's *Kaos*, Mike Gunderloy's *Factsheet Five*, R.U. Sirius' *Mondo 2000*, and *Popular Reality*. These titles bare mention because aspects of each (magick, cyberpunk, alternative sexuality, etc.) are essential components in Bey's Ontological Anarchism and characterize the major themes within the zine network more generally.[10]

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[9] As leading lights in Chaos Magick, the alternative sexualities of Aleister Crowley and William S. Burroughs are cited by numerous Chaos magicians as evidence that sexual nonconformity is magical by nature: See Hine, 2003. The Church of the Subgenius and Discordinaism are two religious groups whose reworking of anarchism through religious language, humor, and esoteric symbolism effectively excludes them from consideration as part of contemporary anarchism.

[10] Scholars looking to reconstruct the most notable individuals and publications within the zine network could scarcely find a better resource

As space constraints prohibit a broader analysis of Ontological Anarchism's development across a number of zines, focus shall here be on one zine, Joel Biroco's *Kaos,* as it not only served as the most influential platform for non-sectarian discussions on Chaos Magick, but also because it printed much of what later became the *Communiqués of Ontological Anarchism.*[11] Before linking the contents of *Kaos* to the development of Ontological Anarchism, though, a few descriptive issues regarding *Kaos* and Chaos Magick merit addressing. As to the latter, providing a brief outline of an entire magical discourse is difficult enough, and this especially so for one oriented in the postmodern project of destabilizing essentialist positions so as to align the magician with the Chaos thought to undergird reality. Suffice it to say that Chaos Magick is a largely existentialist worldview initiated in the late 1970s by two British magicians, Peter Carroll and Ray Sherwin, that is based largely on Nietzsche's "theory of magical science" concerning the will to power, Crowley's religious teachings, and the English mage A.O. Spare's sigilization technique (Rocket, 1988: 18).[12] Essential to Chaos Magick is the meta-belief that belief and identity are tools, indeed "magickal force[s]", that can be used to manipulate reality according to one's will (Caroll, 1987: 39–41). As for the zine, issues of *Kaos* open with incendiary editorial introductions by Biroco, which are followed in no particular order by letters-to-the-editor, longer essays, pirated and original art, book reviews, and a mail-order listing of other zines. Based on both the belief that letters-to-the-editor retained a vitality lost in other modes of writing and Biroco's policy of printing everything, *Kaos* had an exceptionally long and patently polemic letters-to-the-editor section. The result was that passionate discus-

than *TAZ'*s acknowledgment page and back-cover. These pages link the most influential agents in the zine sub-underground to the aging cultural icons who paved the way for them, including Burroughs, Leary, and Ginsberg, all of whom have blurbs on the back cover.

[11] *Kaos* changed it name from *Chaos* in issue 7 to distinguish itself from another Chaos Magick zine, *Chaos International.*

[12] Two articles in *Kaos* 11 illustrate the way in which Crowley's influence in Chaos Magick is denigrated to the point of being lamentable, whereas Nietzsche's is elevated to the highest possible rank. Ramsey Duke's claim that, "Nietzsche [XXX] was my prophet: I preach the Superman, and the Death of God" encapsulates the latter, while Yael Ruth Dragwyla's statement "Crowley was . . . a young and soul-crippled child" articulates the former. Nearly every account of Chaos Magick cites A.O. Spare its first and the most significant theorist. Duke, 1988: 26; Dragwyla, 1988: 20.

sions and vitriolic diatribes alike often extend over a number of issues, and as a primary contributor, Bey's work was both constantly referenced, celebrated, and disparaged.

As *Kaos* operated under a print-everything standard, its international audience encompassed a wide-spectrum of the "lunatic fringe" and topics were often revisited from a number of perspectives. *Kaos* 6 illustrates this point well, as it features an anarchist analysis of language by post-left anarchism luminary Bob Black that responded to an earlier piece by the zine's editor, Biroco, about the language of magick, which was then referenced later in issue 6 by Stephen Sennitt, the creator of the influential zine *NOX,* in an article about the interface between esotericism and linguistic psychology and physics. However, for all of the variety within each issue, opinions concerning the nature of Chaos and in particular the means by which it was to be used magically were central in every issue. While it would be impossible to prove Bey's formulation of Chaos was the most influential of those presented therein, it can be said that Ontological Anarchism was amongst the most discussed approaches in the zine; accordingly, the origins of the formal Post-anarchist discourse cannot be understood outside of the competition between leading schools within the Chaos Magick discourse, and thus informed by Ontological Anarchism's competitors, namely, Thelema, and Genesis P. Orridge's Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth.[13]

If we are to read Ontological Anarchism against competing influences within the Chaos Magick discourse, it is necessary to first characterize their common assumptions. Basically, they all shared the belief that the experience of "gnosis" through magical techniques, rituals, and psychedelics, revealed the anarchic, yet malleable, interplay of the forces that structure reality. Additionally, it was believed that the structure of reality was actively obscured by the "barrage of psychic propaganda" frequently identified in Situationist language as the "Spectacle" (Alistair, 1986; Jackson, 1986). The difference between the competing interpretations of Chaos Magick was in the course of action suggested by the gnostic experiences of Chaos.[14] Far from undisputed, Bey's

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[13] Arguments over these approaches to Chaos Magick are commonplace in *Kaos;* see Paul B., 1986: 15; Rocket, 1988: 18; Biroco, 1986: 35 and 1988: 35.

[14] While it has been suggested that the term Gnosticism be abandoned altogether, debate over the correct ways in which the term gnostic can be used remains heated. The best introduction to the dispute is Williams, 1999. It is set with scare-marks to indicate its emic use in *Kaos.*

conclusions concerning these experiences—which appeared many times within a number of issues—were attacked for being everything from the ramblings of a post-psychedelic airhead to the fearful poses of an intellectual dilettante (Bey, 1988: 9). The majority of critiques directed towards Bey stemmed from his insistence on reading Chaos as a primarily generative force wherein "the Way & the Great Work", or the path of the Chaos magician, was to manifest his imagination in such a way that encompassed the desire of others and in so doing transcend the forces of "thanatos" which in his estimation belong exclusively to the Spectacle (Bey, 1986; 1987a; 1987b; 1978c; 1988).

As mentioned, Ontological Anarchism was a heated topic within the pages of *Kaos.* Bey's strident optimism was in the minority amongst contributors who reveled in pessimistic nihilism, and specifically the exaltation of murder, torture, and the end of the world (Bey, 2003; Biroco, 1988). As evidenced in a text that later became communiqué #4 in *TAZ* (but was entitled "The End of the World" in *Kaos* 6), as well as the text that would become communiqué #5, "Intellectual S / M Is the Fascism of the Eighties—The Avant-Garde Eats Shit and Likes It", it was pure revulsion that spurred Bey, and by extension the AOA, to the position summarized in the line: "Ours is no art of mutilation but of excess, superabundance, amazement" (Bey, 2003: 37). In defining himself against those who were "queer for death" insofar as they celebrated not conviviality but "thanatosis" and *Schadenfreude*, Bey increasingly altered his theorizing in the mirror of the other authors published in *Kaos* (Bey, 2003: 38). The tension between these two camps—with Bey's "self-realization, beauty, and adventure" approach to Chaos set against the "gnostic fascism" of Rabbi Rabinowitz and Stephen Sennitt (to name only two representatives)—came to a head across four issues on the topic of using the image of the murderer, and specifically Marquis de Sade, in black magick practice and Chaos Magick in general. The numerous responses from Bey contained in each issue reflected the development of Ontological Anarchism over and against those enticed by the power of the darker aspects of Chaos Magick. Considering that Bey's responses, many of which underwent no editing from the original form they possessed in *Kaos*, were collected years later as the *Communiqués of Ontological Anarchism* and inserted as the middle section of *TAZ*, it is not an overstatement to claim that in neglecting their original context, historians cannot understand what Ontological Anarchism is or to what it was responding.

The dispute over de Sade was by no means an isolated incident. As Ontological Anarchism, like Bey's concept of Chaos, was routinely foregrounded in the pages of *Kaos,* so too were the critiques of it. To clarify what Chaos actually meant to Bey, and in turn shed light on Post-anarchism's origin, the next section shall outline how Bey defined this concept and the implications he saw therein for realizing autonomy through esoteric spirituality.

ONTOLOGICAL ANARCHISM

> *This is not just a matter of spiritual dandyism, but also of existential commitment to an underlying spontaneity, to a philosophical "tao." For all its waste of energy, in its very formlessness, anarchism alone of all the ISMs approaches that one type of form which alone can interest us today, that strange attractor, the shape of chaos— which (one last quote [from Nietzsche]) one must have within oneself, if one is to give birth to a dancing star.*
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> Hakim Bey, "Post-Anarchism Anarchy"

Ontological Anarchism is Bey's formulation of a more authentically anarchist anarchism, one which reflects the ontological state of being, which he identifies as the boundless vitality of Chaos. Harking back to A.O. Spare, whom Sherwin and Carroll recognized as the father of the Chaos Magick discourse, Hakim Bey describes Chaos as synonymous with the Dao of the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi.*[15] Further, utilizing the palimpsestic approach that characterizes much of his work, Bey additionally references the Babylonian Goddess Tiamat, fractals, and Hesiod's *Theogony* as illustrating variant aspects of Chaos, which, he argues, exceeds the capacity of any rendering or conceptualization. In essence, Chaos, the primordial and infinite, "inert & spontaneous," and "original undifferentiated oneness-of-being" is the indestructible, unmitigated potentiality that simultaneously vivifies and is all that exists: in his words, "chaos is life" (Bey, 2001: 1; 2003: 3).

[15] The decontextualization and appropriation of the Dao in the Chaos Magick discourse follows a trend that runs through much of 20th and 19th century esotericism. Nearly a century before figures like Biroco, Bey, and Sherwin adopted the Dao as a synonym for their conception of Chaos, Crowley incorporated an idiosyncratic interpretation of Daoism into his religious system known as Thelema. Space constraints limit any discussion of the notable influence of Crowley's idiosyncratic conception of Daoism in the Chaos Magick milieu, however, it nonetheless remains a topic ripe for research. For an extended discussion of Crowley's engagement with Daoism see Nillson, 2013: 118–124.

Characteristic of the Chaos Magick milieu, Nietzsche's philosophy also plays a major role in Bey's work and his conceptualization of Ontological Anarchism is no exception. Reminiscent of the opening passage of the *Daodejing,* Bey makes clear that Chaos cannot be defined; however, it can be described, and he does so in explicitly Nietzschean terms as being "based on nothing" and as a consequence, inherently "for Life" (Bey, 2001: 1). Described as explicitly against what Bey saw as the fashionable nihilism and pessimism of the time, he argued that Chaos' basis in nothingness and expression as sheer potentiality meant that nothing, be it natural law or god, obstructed the expression of will; in fact, the chaotic nothingness afforded the will absolute power to create. Chaos is, for him, a limitless existential affirmation of all creation and possibilities, an overtly generative and gratuitously generous force that allows humanity to create the values that best serve the fulfillment of its desires. Articulating what Lewis Call would later term Nietzsche's "affirmative anarchism of becoming" (Lewis, 2001: 50), Bey describes Chaos by stating:

> If I wanted to be fancy I could call this *nothing* the Abyss . . . or even god, if only to confuse the issue. My pet term is "ontological anarchy"—meaning that being itself is in a state of chaos, & that life is free to generate its own spontaneous orders. . . . *the generosity of being IS becoming.* (Bey, [undated]: 8)

At the heart of Ontological Anarchism is the knowledge that Chaos, conceived of not as a single entity, but as the undetermined, creative potential that underwrites being, defines reality, and this potential allows humanity, to paraphrase Nietzsche, to give birth to a dancing star.

As eminent Sinologists A.C. Graham and Arthur Waley noted of the Dao, ontological Chaos effectively undermines the legitimacy of all hegemons and abrogates all laws—be they laws of nature, church, or the state (Graham, 1989: 299-305; Waley, 1939: 70–75) More than simply nullifying them, recognizing Chaos as the ontological state of existence renders law an impossibility according to Bey.[16] Condensed into the slogan "Chaos never

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[16] The claim that the ontological state of reality invalidates even the possibility of law or governmemnt is commonly attributed to Zhuangzi in Discordian and to a lesser extent Chaos Magick texts; however, no such matter of fact claim is made is present in the text attributed to him. See Wilson, 1998: 304; Shea, 1975: 1.

died", Bey argues that every form of law is a perverse impossibility because the cosmos is an ever-changing flux of potentiality, which makes the imposition of order a spurious illusion only made true by coercion. In Bey's words: "Ontological Anarchy however replies that no 'state' can 'exist,' in chaos, that all ontological claims are spurious except the claim of chaos . . . and therefore that governance of any sort is impossible" (Bey, 2001: 2). That is, the propagation of law, as well as its apparent existence, is illusory in the sense that it is the product of someone's imagination which has gained general acceptance over and against every other possible alternative. Bey is careful to point out that ontological Chaos means everything is equally real, even illusions, and what is more, they can serve deadly ends (Bey, 2001: 2). From this conclusion, Bey asserts that insurrectionary action against the forces that impinge on one's autonomy is less important than overcoming the insidious self-alienation that occurs when one internalizes the illusions of "Babylon or the Spectacle, Capital or Empire, [or the] Society of Simulation" (Bey, 2003: 84). In this vein, it is important to note Bey's recurrent advocacy of violence against *ideas* in the form of "poetic terrorism" and "art sabotage," which supersede the futility of battling the police and potentially martyring oneself for some abstract cause. While one cannot hope to defeat the police state, according to Bey, one can overcome the *idea* of police and achieve an even more meaningful form of liberation since physically battling the police serves to dignify the illusions they represent and perpetuate—like law, order, state control—which may in turn lead to them being internalized. Adopting the illusions of the state, or any hegemon, destroys the possibility of any substantive attempt at autonomy, for it is only from the unmitigated freedom of Chaos that true autonomy, that is, self-ownership free from what Nietzsche termed resentment, can arise (Bey, 2003: 64–71; 2001:1).

Bey believes that Chaos, which is to say existence itself, is defined by its propensity for creativity and abundance, and by virtue of being inextricably embedded in it, humans too are fundamentally endowed with the ability to be ever more imaginative in regards to affirming the chaotic nature of reality. However, the normative status and acceptance of abstractions like work, history, and even the revolution occlude humanity's naturally cosmic magnanimity. Bey argues that through the faculty of the imagination and use of the will, as well as magical techniques and the administration of sacraments ("The AOA sacraments are hemp, wine, coffee, tea, meat & brandy . . . & of course psychedelics"

(Bey, 1987c: 20)), reality can be directly experienced for what it is, Chaos, and in so doing one learns to fashion it according to one's desires as opposed to those of the Spectacle. While we will return to Bey's description of this fashioning as sorcery, it is important to note that he likens breaching the false simulacra of life perpetuated by advertisers and the entertainment industry with a gnostic experience of the marvelous, and that the manner in which Bey describes the act of breaching the *images* of life so as to access it in its actuality represents an innovative synthesis of the occult philosophy of William S. Burroughs and Raoul Vaneigem's concept of the revolution of everyday life.

Lest autonomy or the Dao become mere images of themselves, Bey insists that they be understood as "identical" insofar as they only exist in the unmediated enjoyment of the tangible benefits of such things as "[f]ood, money, sex, sleep, sun, sand, & sinsemilla" (Bey, 2003: 10, 79–83). Following groups like Ranters, Diggers, and Hassan-i Sabbah's mythical Assassin,[17] whom he claims as spiritual anarchist forbearers, Bey's assertion concerning humanity's innate potential and rejection of mediation lead him to proclaim: "[t]here is no becoming, no revolution, no struggle, no path; already you're the monarch of your own skin—your inviolate freedom waits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs" (Bey, 2003: 4). These conclusions concerning the anarchist revolution should be read in the antinomian tradition, that is, with the understanding that humanity already possesses whatever benefit would be conferred upon them by some holy event, be it the Second Coming or The Revolution. In addition to affirming the universal presence of Chaos, the previous quote also illuminates another integral tenet of Ontological Anarchism: the elusive dream of the anarchist utopia is now possible in the form of an intersubjective union with other ontological anarchists, a state which reflects the natural, non-dual order of the cosmos.

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[17] Through his personal relationship to Brion Gysin and William Burroughs, both of which made the legend of Hassan-i Sabbah a central feature in their fictional works, Wilson would come to adopt the figure as his own. When writing as Bey, the mythic qualities Hassan-i Sabbah and his Assassins would be referenced to demonstrate the "still unimagined liberties" to be gained through Ontological Anarchism, yet, when writing as Wilson, the historical aspects of the legend would be brought to the fore. Much remains to be written about the cultural reception of Sabbah both in and outside of the interface between esotericism and anarchism. See Burroughs, 1994; Murphy, 1997; Bey, 2003: 13–14; Wilson, 1999.

Described in terms of the Surrealist concept of Amour Fou, Bey identifies love as the key factor in the synthesis of Individualist Anarchism, esotericism, and Daoist non-dualism which produced Ontological Anarchism. This love is neither romantic nor fraternal, but akin to an exalted state of transcendental, interpersonal union; indeed, it is the incarnation of Eros that holds within it supreme enlightenment. Paraphrasing Hesiod's *Theogony*, he writes: "After Chaos comes Eros—the principle of order implicit in the nothingness of the unqualified One" (Bey, 2003: 21). As a non-ordinary state of consciousness, the experience of erotic union is, like other gnostic experiences, equated with directly knowing Chaos itself: through Eros the "Other completes the Self—the Other gives us the key to the perception of oneness-of-being" (Bey 2003: 69). Thus, by breaching the abstractions and images of civilization, one comes closer to the source of being, Chaos; and its primary means of expression, Eros, functions as the precondition and substance of autonomy, the natural state of cosmos and humanity. As part of an inspired response to the de Sade debate in *Kaos*, Bey defined this mystical form of intersubjective autonomy as vital to Ontological Anarchism:

> Ontological Anarchy defines itself according to the monist principle that the self involves the Other, is identifiable with the Other; that the self's freedom depends on the Other's freedom in some degree . . . a politique of eros not thanatos. (Bey, 1987c: 20)

Breaching the world of mediation, whether through Eros, magic, or psychedelics, stands as the goal of Ontological Anarchism. As such, Bey devoted a large part of his career to this end by researching the history of and theory behind what he termed Temporary Autonomous Zones, or T.A.Z.—areas of geography where the imagination was as liberated as the soil.[18] It bears repeating here that his most celebrated piece, the long essay entitled *TAZ*, was developed from ideas already present in his zine *Chaos* and the communiqués, and that the book in which the essay appears is a collection of these three works, despite being referred to in the singular as *TAZ*. Most of the research on Bey and Wilson (of

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[18] Though Wilson would, in a lecture in 1999, claim: "the book is old enough to read itself and it really should as there is a lot of outdated nonsense in that book," it remains an important aspect of his corpus and a necessary link to his current work on the intersection between Luddism, radical environmentalism, and hermeticism. See Wilson, 1999; 2007.

which there is little to begin with) revolves around the "temporary autonomous zone" and thus I will only state that he explained it as the matrix for the emergence of a Sorelian myth of "Uprising" and a "pre-echo of the Insurrection . . . a necessary step towards the Revolution that will realize utopia" (See Grindon, 2004; Moore, 2004; Matheny, 1993).

Ontological Anarchism is based on the claim that Chaos defines reality, and whether through Eros or psychedelics, a direct experience of it constitutes an altered state of consciousness that holds vast power. One outlet for this power is sorcery; as Bey claims, "the goals of ontological anarchism appear in its flowering" (Bey, 2003: 23). In other words, the widening of perception necessary for harmonizing with Chaos will inherently lead the individual to understand the ways in which consciousness and the will represent real forces and how the products of the imagination can be made tangible when one understand how they function. Bey illustrates this point in *Kaos* 8 when, mediating between two opposing magicians, he recommends "[saving] our bile for the shits who really deserve it, the really successful evil magicians, the bankers, advertisers, weapons-salesmen, educators & self-appointed rulers" (Bey, 1987a: 12). The reality of banks, ads, guns, and law-men exemplifies the way in which these "evil magicians" have manifested the contents of their imaginations to the point where they are taken as really existing. Against these evil magicians, Bey advocates breaking the "Spook world's" monopoly of control with a counter-magic, sorcery in fact, which in the process of materializing the individual's true desires banishes the illusions of the social order (Matheny, 1993). He explains: "[s]orcery breaks no law of nature because there is no Natural Law, only the spontaneity of natura naturans, the tao" (Bey 2003: 23). Thus, insofar as the impossibility of law derives from the world being inherently chaotic, it would not be incorrect to claim that Bey's investment in this counter-magick is more fundamental than his opposition to the law as such.

With titles like "Black Magic as Revolutionary Action", the communiqués published in the Chaos Magick milieu testify to the complimentary nature of anarchism and esotericism as Bey construed them.[19] Further, as the communiqués represent the longest

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[19] As mentioned, the communiqués were published in a number of zines and Bey estimates the number being possibly in the hundreds; however, if one can gauge appreciation in terms of both influence and polemics, then it seems reasonable to suggest that the Chaos Magick milieu remained among the most committed audience for Bey's work as he

section in *TAZ*, one cannot but read the book's popularity as a sign of the underground appeal of anti-authoritarian texts engaged with esotericism. Insofar as Ontological Anarchism cannot be divorced from the magical milieu in which it matured, one must ask how developments from it, like Post-anarchism, rest on thoroughly esoteric conceptions of consciousness, the will, and Chaos, perhaps unknowingly. For historians of Post-anarchism, Bey's *Chaos* zine and the communiqués of the AOA represent founding documents, and the job of reconciling their esoteric worldview to Post-anarchism remains unfinished.

CONCLUSION

In the AOA, Ontological Anarchism possessed a body, both in the sense of an institutional framework (however imaginary) and one composed of flesh and bones, namely, Wilson's.[20] Always written in the third person, the communiqués of the AOA presented themselves as representing the post-Situationist avant-garde of the anarchist movement, which, it is important to note, used as its primary channel the most popular underground magickal movement of the 1980s, i.e., Chaos Magick. Ontological Anarchism distinguished itself as the premiere form of both occultism and anarchism through its denunciations of Leftist anarchism, New Age religion, and rival "Death freak" occultism. Its stirring provo-

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developed Ontological Anarchism. Also, it bears noting that Bey's work, numbering *well over* a hundred texts of various lengths, would be nearly impossible to catalogue, as a result of (with a few significant exceptions) the tragic lack of interest in organizing zines and underground publications. This is to say nothing of accounting for the disorganized collections of low quality and in some cases clandestinely recorded lectures, Naropa classes, and Moorish Orthodox Crusade radio dispersed across the web.

[20] While Bey admits to initiating a number of hoaxes, it would be incorrect to categorize the AOA as such on account of its single person membership. For all intents and purposes, the AOA represented a serious contribution to the Chaos Magick and anarchist discourse and thus does not deserve to be disregarded as a hoax. This is not to say that hoaxes cannot make serious contributions to any given discourse; they can and do, as may be the case with the text attributed to Zhuangzi and is certainly the case with Discordianism. See Ziporyn, 2009: xv.n.8. It remains to be said that Bey's most notable hoax remains his participation in Ong's Hat (see Kinsella, 2011). In terms of related hoaxes, see also the forged Italian language Hakim Bey book *A Ruota Libera,* and what looks like a second forgery, *Il Giardino dei Cannibali,* although I have yet to confirm this personally (Anonymous, 1996; 2011).

cations for radical action through black magick, ubiquitous pane-gyrics for queer spirituality, and ludic revolt are noteworthy in themselves; furthermore, its inflammatory position papers, the most relevant of which is "Post-anarchism Anarchy" is where the formal Post-anarchism discourse is said to have originated. It is interesting to wonder if Bey's Ontological Anarchism would have been credited as founding Post-anarchism if he had not written this piece and in the process coined the term "Post-Anarchism". Surely, Ontological Anarchism would be just as noteworthy an innovation regarding the anarchist tradition without the text. Yet, would his thorough investment in esotericism, or any of his other unpopular preoccupations, have kept him from being cited as the originator of the Post-anarchism discourse?[21] If any serious arguments can be raised that insist on excluding him on the basis of their spiritual or sexual inclinations, one must question a great deal more than the insistence on the negation of identity that is so often promoted as integral to defining Post-anarchism.

In lieu of pursuing the above question any further (and a definitive answer is, in any case, impossible) attention should be focused on Bey's "Post-Anarchism Anarchy" text, as it is singled out as particularly significant in the history of Post-anarchism. Without detracting from the originality of Bey's work, what emerges after close analysis of this text is that much of the AOA's 9-point program for a Post-Anarchism is derived from a pre-existing anarcho-esoteric group, the Discordian Society, which Bey mentions in his communiqués (Bey, 2003: 60). Indubitably, convenience is a major factor in the convention to cite the "Post-Anarchism Anarchy" communiqué as the birth of formal Post-anarchism discourse for the very good reason that Bey coined the

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[21] This article opened by citing an anecdote from Knight's biography of Wilson. It bears mentioning that Knight's text is far from authoritative or even fully reliable. Half way through the text Knight claims to have become suddenly aware that Wilson promoted and espoused man-boy-love as a viable sexuality and immediately lost interest in recording his subject's life. Knight then proceeded to finish the text with autobiographical writings intermingled with fictitious episodes of an Islamic superhero. His description of realizing Wilson's sexuality, though, rings particularly bogus on account of the fact that Wilson is quite open about his sexuality, even to the point of devoting numerous texts to intergenerational relationships. It seems certain that Knight would have been well aware of Wilson's sexuality long before starting to write his biography, and simply used it as an excuse to present his own work as superseding that of his former guru. See Knight, 2012. For a sample of Wilson's writings on man-boy love see Bey, 1980; Bey, 1993.

term; however, historically, Discordianism provides an even better site for the birth of the cluster of discourses that compose contemporary Post-anarchism. It not only predates Ontological Anarchism (it was formed in 1958), but presaged Ontological Anarchism in a number of important ways: it heralded Nietzsche as the necessary component in the synthesis of Daoism and anarchism, it promoted the worship of Eris, the Greek goddess of Chaos, and it operated through the mail-order home-made publication network that would eventually develop into the zine network which popularized Ontological Anarchy (and of which Bey calls for the further development in point 4 of his Post-anarchy Anarchism "program" (Bey, 2003: 62)).[22] As a religious formulation of anarchism based upon a Nietzschean reading of Daoism and occultism, Discordianism laid the groundwork for Chaos Magick, and Ontological Anarchism in particular. It did this by shifting the ontological foundations of anarchism to an esoteric reading of Chaos, whereupon liberation could no longer be conceived of in terms of material gains won from the oppressor class, but in the freedom to (re)create reality. Before Bey called for a revitalized anarchism based upon mystical experience, figures like Kerry Thornley and Robert Anton Wilson (both of whom were close friends of Bey) had already published their most popular Discordian works, based on a revitalized spiritual anarchism informed by esoteric systems including the Kabbalah and the work of Aleister Crowley. Thornley's *Zenarchy* and Wilson's *Illuminatus!* trilogy (co-authored with anarchist zinester Robert Shea) stand out as particularly influential texts which combine anarchism with spiritual principles along the lines Bey suggests in "Post-Anarchism Anarchy." The indistinguishability between Discordianism and Bey's Ontological Anarchism has led many within the Chaos Magic milieu to anachronistically label Discordianism a form of Ontological Anarchism and by extension Chaos Magick; this may not be too far off the mark, as the original Dis-

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[22] A notable parallel between Discordianism and Ontological Anarchism concerns the misreading of their primary sources by various scholars. Like *Chaos*, the primary text of Discordinanism, *The Principia Discordia*, originated as a copylefted zine, which circulated for years within the zine network before eventually being published as a book. In the years it circulated, it was altered significantly as a result of the sub-culture that embraced it. Scholars who read the *Principia* and *TAZ* as monolithic texts fail to understand both how the texts came about and the issues that inspired them. See Cusack, 2010: 8–52; Urban, 2006: 233–239. No assessment of Discordianism has been written that takes zines into consideration.

cordians themselves embraced Bey's work as a form of Discordian scripture (Thornely, 2009: 18).

While designating Bey's Ontological Anarchism as the birth of a formal Post-anarchism discourse has been helpful as a historical sign-post for scholars looking to date Post-anarchism, scholars must recognize that this designation is somewhat arbitrarily applied to Bey's work as he was the first to use the term. In truth, Ontological Anarchism was largely a generalization of the conspiratorial anarcho-occultism first theorized in Discordianism and, as such, it would be much more accurate to state that formal Post-anarchism discourse began with Discordianism. However, the question remains: how do scholars benefit from shifting the origin of Post-anarchism to Discordianism? The answer concerns both historical accuracy and the advantages of adopting an anti-essentialist understanding of identity and origin. Whereas scholars once recognized Ontological Anarchism as the progenitor of Post-anarchism, now that Bey's work has been set within its occultist context, they are obliged to take into consideration Chaos Magick, Discordianism, and a host of alternative magickal systems that continue to shape Post-anarchism discourse. Far from being dead weight, the esoteric discourses integral to Ontological Anarchism offer scholars of Post-anarchism entirely new regions of theoretical terrain as well as a range of unexpected alliances that have gone without notice for decades. The integration of these overlooked esoteric antecedents into Post-anarchism will create a fuller historical picture, and in so doing will reveal it to be a rich hybrid of a number of diverse discourses.

Indeed, Post-anarchism did not begin with any single author or group; its origins are hybrid and stem from a multiplicity of discourses: post-structural criticism, the fiction of William Burroughs, Chaos Magick, Discordianism, Nietzsche, Stirner, etc.; the list could go on indefinitely. However, historical texts can act as a prism through which topics like post-anarchism can be understood more clearly. In this vein, the loose anarcho-queer-magickal zine network beginning with the Discordian Society stands as a prime example of the sociality that post-anarchism would claim to herald decades later. The mailing of home-made zines, mail-art, and xerography exemplified the mutual connectedness of polycentric, volunteer association networks composed of self-organizing systems that many postanarchists hold as the structure of postanarchist politics. In this sense, Joel Biroco, speaking for the anarcho-queer-magickal milieu, may have been right when he wrote: 'I am the early representative of a future crowd'

(Biroco 1988: 5). As the cross-pollination of magick, anarchism, and queer sexualities within the zine network, and then in the pages of *TAZ*, helped create the next generation of cultural radicals, scholars must be prepared to adjust their scholarly instruments to meet new sources and new conceptions of anarchism as well as its history.

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