

Dis-owning Knowledge: Anarchist Intervention in Intellectual Property Rights

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## Abstract

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(Under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Holland)

Several streams of contemporary activism oppose hegemonic concepts of privatized property and question ownership of intellectual production. In this paper I focus on anarchist contributions to this discussion. I examine an American anarchist perspective, as it is expressed in both the content and writing practices of a contemporary anarchist publication, the Crimethinc Ex-Workers Collective's Days of War, Nights of Love. Through analysis of the book, I infer anarchist engagement with knowledge as a commons, and trace the philosophy that anyone can produce art, writing, and other tasks often relegated to an expert. My questions are: What are contemporary anarchist conceptions of private property? How is the anarchist objection, or challenge, to private property articulated in the debate over intellectual property? How does Crimethinc understand Days of War, Nights of Love as a form of direct action?

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## Introduction

Ownership refers to the legitimate possession of material or property; theft is the unlawful seizure of another's property. In the culture of capitalism, stealing is commonly perceived as a moral issue. By shifting terms and adjusting or rejecting moralities, anarchists have historically sought to redefine the certainty of dominant capitalist definitions. Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar, in Culture of Politics, Politics of Culture, explain that, "when [social] movements deploy alternative conceptions of woman, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship that unsettle dominant cultural meanings, they enact a cultural politics"(7). By this they mean that movements attempt to intervene and challenge prevailing political understandings in ways that makes visible questionable aspects of systems of meaning. Cultural politics work to challenge the dominant interpretation of meaning and experience, as well as to identify undesirable assumptions of the political system. Anarchists, in challenging prevailing conceptualizations of property and legitimizing marginal forms of knowledge, are engaging in cultural politics. For contemporary anarchists, the debate over the legitimacy of property includes a dialogue about intellectual property. In this paper, I focus on the anarchist participation in the discussion of intellectual property rights. As an example of contemporary anarchy, I will analyze the book, Days of War, Nights of Love by the Crimethinc Ex-Worker's Collective. Through words and writing practices, Days of War, Nights of Love articulates a position on property ownership, and provides a theoretical critique of capitalism.

In order to examine an anarchist position on intellectual property, I need to provide a short outline of anarchy, including its contentious past and present. A brief examination of property is also necessary, as well as a look at anarchists' varied positions on property ownership. In order to engage in the anarchist rejection of private property, and therefore intellectual property, I briefly consider the development of intellectual property rights, particularly the history of copyright. Following the clarification of the association between private property and intellectual property, I look at how software programmers are currently debating the issue of copyright. Often sharing a language, many contemporary anarchists and programmers have taken a principled stand against the privatization of ideas. In analyzing the anarchist book, Days of War, Nights of Love as direct action, I examine how this stand articulates a larger anarchist philosophy against privatized property, and the system of capitalism. I will include an analysis on how the removal of authorship conveys a rejection of authority and ownership. Finally, I will look at how the authors of Days of War, Nights of Love put theory into action. I look at how the book is used as a tool to engage the reader in anarchist thought and evaluate the disruptions that exist to maintain that engagement`.

Discussed throughout this essay, a brief introduction of Crimethinc is necessary. The Crimethinc Ex-Workers<sup>1</sup> Collective (referred to as Crimethinc throughout the essay) is a contemporary anarchist organization that produces artwork, magazines, and books from a

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<sup>1</sup> "Ex-Worker" refers to Crimethinc's concern that identity is developed from the position of 'worker'. Many contemporary anarchists argue that a job removes meaning from daily life, becomes one's identity, and makes a population dull and passive. Crimethinc seeks to define new identities outside the labor praxis.

contemporary anarchist perspective.<sup>2</sup> It self-consciously creates these works as an intervention in dominant practices of intellectual ownership and production. While there are many anarchist collectives, the Crimethinc Collective is unique in both the quality of its publications, and its global readership. Crimethinc's book, Days of War, Nights of Love, engages with classical and contemporary anarchist principles of ownership and expertise. In this paper I will be looking at how anarchist principles of knowledge production manifest through direct action in the book Days of War, Nights of Love.

### What is Anarchy?

In order to understand contemporary anarchist conceptualizations of property, it is necessary to briefly sketch some longstanding themes of anarchist thought. It is not my purpose to present an exhaustive history of libertarian thought, but relevant grounding points are useful.

There are many forms of anarchy, both historically and currently (Woodcock, 1977 ; Guerin, 1970; Woodcock, 1992; Graham, 2005). Familiar articulations of anarchy include the anarcho-syndicalists, such as the Spanish anarchists, libertarian socialists, as Noam Chomsky is often labeled, and others such as anarcho-communists, eco-anarchists (Green Anarchists), anarcha-feminists, mutualists, and even anarcho-capitalists. The word anarchy derives from Greek, and can be broken down to mean, "without ruler/authority". Anarchy is a form of resistance to hierarchy and centralized structures of authority. It emphasizes mutual aid, free association, and egalitarian decision making-usually through consensus. Opposed to governmental control, anarchy searches for more satisfying forms of association

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<sup>2</sup> With its first publication finished in 2001, one could estimate that the collective has been organized for approximately ten years. The ordering addresses suggest that the primary location for Crimethinc is either the American South, or Canada, both of which are probably true.

through self-organization. An anarchist would argue that the state is the greatest perpetrator of violence, and that only through the abolition of the state can a true, egalitarian, society form. Its philosophy of the person argues that people are inherently good, but are often driven to negative ends through competition and authoritarian aggression. In practice, many anarchists subscribe to the view that the means should also be the ends; any action taken to invoke change should resemble the desired change. If the aim is an egalitarian society, then the means (decisions, productions, distribution) should reflect the organization and action of an egalitarian society.

A skeletal account of anarchist history begins with nineteenth century anarchists espousing anti-statist, anti-centralist principles, eventually coming into opposition with Communism. This confrontation led to a mainstream retreat for some anarchists, particularly European and Russian. Soon later there was a re-surfacing for other anarchists, especially in the American labor and birth control movement. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century a variety of groups proclaimed anarchist influence. These included the Dadaists, the Surrealists, the Situationists, the Neoists<sup>3</sup>, the punks, and certain political actors of the 1960's and 1970's. It is often argued that with the fall of the U.S.S.R. in 1989, and the demise of Communism as the ultimate "other" to Capitalism, anarchy re-emerged as a viable critique of consumer culture. Included in this history is the late twentieth century birth of the Internet,

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<sup>3</sup> "Neoism refers both to a specific subcultural network of artistic performance and media experimentalists and more generally to a practical underground philosophy. It operates with collectively shared pseudonyms and identities, pranks, paradoxes, plagiarism and fakes, and has created multiple contradicting definitions of itself in order to defy categorization and historization" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoist).

contributing to the widely read communiqués of the Zapatistas<sup>4</sup> in 1994, and the visible anarchist participation in American protests in Seattle in 1999<sup>5</sup>, leading us to today's vibrant anarchist debates.

An anarchist, or, for that matter, an anthropologist, would find this history very problematic. A history like this is enmeshed in a rational, progression-oriented linearity.<sup>6</sup> It is a standardization of time and events that many anarchists would prefer to complicate, if not outright abandon. In rejecting this historical construction, anarchists seek a more inclusive, less chronological, history. A feature of anarchism is that many anarchists look to historical examples for inspiration, and label them anarchist. Because of this, anarchists' accounts of history would include the Diggers in the English Enclosure Movement as well as the pirate Blackbeard. While an anarchist history defies certain rational classifications and progressive intelligibility, it re-appropriates diverse historical actors to legitimate anarchy and reassures contemporary anarchists that anarchy is not as marginal as it appears. It is useful to view anarchist history as a series of outbursts, or emergent forms, with no real chronology or isolated actors

In order to discern the form of action Days of War, Nights of Love constitutes for anarchists, I need to clarify two terms- "Propaganda of the Deed" and "Direct Action". The

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<sup>4</sup> While the Zapatistas do not claim an anarchist identity, they share many organizing tactics with anarchy, and have inspired autonomous groups globally.

<sup>5</sup> Made more visible with the birth of an anarchist news source- [www.indymedia.com](http://www.indymedia.com).

<sup>6</sup> The common definition of linearity, a word used frequently in this paper, is appropriate for understanding its use by activists. Linear is defined as, "relating to a straight line or capable of being represented by a straight line; developed sequentially from the obvious without an in-depth understanding" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; Tenth Edition 1999). Often activists use it to describe hierarchical or progression oriented organizational practices. Horizontality has been used to describe non-hierarchical, consensus-based processes, and, in this context, linearity is used to represent the opposite.

anarchist, Peter Kropotkin, who wrote, “A single deed is better propaganda than a thousand pamphlets”, first popularized the idea of Propaganda of the Deed. At the time, such deeds included assassinations and bomb throwing-- including the assassination of President McKinley, and thus the familiar image of the bomb-throwing anarchist. As a model and a philosophy, it was hoped that people would be inspired to take revolutionary action. Eventually many anarchists rejected violent action against people for both moral and tactical reasons. As the idea of violence as the first tactical approach faded, concepts such as direct action and theory in practice took the tactical foreground.

Direct action<sup>7</sup> includes strikes, boycotts, workplace occupations, sit-ins, sabotage (art, property damage, billboard alteration), and community building, such as establishing community centers or events to feed the homeless (Food Not Bombs). The goal is to incite action, protest, or affirmation through any means available. Jeff Ferrell explains that direct action means doing the impossible, or what seems impossible, and thereby demonstrating its possibility. He explains:

“Without asking permission, without lobbying for legal approval, anarchists simply and directly take action against existing arrangements of authority- and in accomplishing such action prove to themselves and others that no permission is needed, that authority is neither timeless nor absolute, that alternative actions and arrangements are imaginable” (Ferrell 2001: 27).

In this way, the legitimacy of authority is challenged. Direct Action is more than the actual action taken; it is embodied proof of the possibility of action. With many anarchists, action is often not with the intention of a future outcome, but serves in the immediate to show the possibility of disorder, object to standardization, and prove that revolution is in the everyday.

While limited to a literary format, Days of War, Nights of Love is direct action through its

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<sup>7</sup> A popular word, familiar to many activists, several events organized by the civil rights movement, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., employed direct action.

deviation from the usual form of a book and through persuasive discourse designed to incite action and show that alternatives are possible.

### Tensions within Anarchist Activism

Contemporary anarchists are as difficult to frame as their historical counterparts. In order to identify the type of anarchist position represented in the book Days of War, Nights of Love, I must introduce a few tensions within the contemporary anarchist discourse.

Despite valuing historical awareness, tensions arise among proponents in the distinction between classical and contemporary anarchy. As Christina Foust says, “contemporary anarchists have a somewhat conflicted relationship with the classical canon of anarchy”(Foust 2004: 32). She explains that the current movement is marked by transformation and debate among self-identified anarchists, with many conversations centering on the instability and ambiguity of contemporary anarchists’ identification with both classical anarchist theory and its revisions after post-modern and post-structuralist dialogues. One of the problems is the tone of classical writing. Often academics writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, today’s readers tend to interpret classical anarchists as dogmatic and authoritative. As a movement suspicious of vanguardism, there is a resistance to anything that appears to present itself as canonical doctrine. Other problems include the near or total neglect of women in classical anarchy, the anti-Semitic leanings of some thinkers, and the frequently un-examined positions of privilege.

Historically, a tension has existed between collectivist and individualist anarchists. Kropotkin, an early developer of anarcho-communism, argued in 1876 that wages and any form of distribution should not be based on work performed, but should be based on need and mutual aid (Woodcock 1992). This is a collectivist approach, with an emphasis on the

health of the community, as well as social change and solidarity. Differing from collectivists, the individualist Max Stirner, in the 1840s, argued for the intrinsic worth of the unique individual, and expressed interest both in freeing the individual from alienating labor and wage slavery, as well as from standardization, or as he referred to it, “the oppressive chains of conformity” (Guerin 1998: 5). The individualist argument is that one cannot free society from its constraints, if the individual’s mind is enslaved. It argues that the responsibility of the anarchist is first to the self, and to unleashing personal potential; revolutionary action can only occur after the self has broken its bonds of societal constraints.

A modern-day source of tension is the actual practice of anarchy; the historical debate between individualists and collectivists manifests as a debate over methodology. Murray Bookchin describes the divide as the difference between social and lifestyle anarchists (Bookchin 1995), which Dave Neal distinguishes as big ‘A’ and little ‘a’ anarchists (or ideological and methodological anarchists) (Neal 1997). Bookchin explains:

“For some two centuries, anarchism- a very ecumenical body of anti-authoritarian ideas- developed in tension between two basically contradictory tendencies: a personalistic commitment to individual autonomy and a collectivist commitment to social freedom. These tendencies have by no means been reconciled in the history of libertarian thought” (Bookchin 1995: 4).

Bookchin argues that the non-rationalist, impulsive anarchist seeking autonomous zones of pleasure and freedom, are deeply engaged in individualistic bourgeois self-satisfaction, and are not anarchists, but shallow narcissists. He complains:

“Ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura, an aversion to theory oddly akin to the antirational biases of post modernism, celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organizational commitment to the imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction has taken on Euro-American anarchism over the past two decades” (Bookchin 1995: 3).

He cites the collective ‘Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers’, the Situationists, and several authors, especially Hakim Bey<sup>8</sup>, as guilty of this irrational lifestyle philosophy. Judged by these standards, Days of War, Nights of Love would be vulnerable to this criticism and labeled “lifestyle anarchists”.

Another contentious distinction among contemporary anarchists is post-left anarchism. This is a dissociation from both historic and contemporary leftist movements, and from anarchists who maintain an affiliation with the left. According to Jason McQuinn, “Post-left anarchists want to see anarchists define their own autonomous movement, theory and activities free from the deadweight of over identification with the left” (McQuinn 2006). Many of these groups attempt to resist single-issue struggles and a perceived leftist attachment to ideology. Post-left anarchists argue that over identification with the left has diluted anarchism, and distracted it from its goals. This means that they do not want to simply resist the war, or resist the prison system, but that they want to unify in a single, anti-authoritarian resistance that can take a stance against all consumerist, statist practices.<sup>9</sup>

According to the standards outlined above, the Crimethinc Collective, is classified as post-left, lifestyle anarchists.<sup>10</sup> While it can be argued that an in depth analysis of ideas is the privilege of bored bourgeois intellectuals, lifestyle anarchists would argue that in order to transform a larger, perhaps more meaningful structure, one must deeply analyze the minutia

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<sup>8</sup> Hakim Bey is the pseudonym for the author and poet Peter Lambert Wilson. He describes his philosophy as ontological anarchy (immediatism) and is best known for his concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone.

<sup>9</sup> Some of the active debate is available at [www.infoshop.org](http://www.infoshop.org).

<sup>10</sup> This distinction is vital, as contemporary anarchists vary. For example, Murray Bookchin (or rather the publisher he chooses) copyrights his books.

of the existing system. In rejecting Bookchin's accusations, they argue that in order to change the system, one must break the chains existing in one's own mind. These contemporary anarchists seek to redefine systems of authority through enacting viable theories of practice. In this way, theories are exhibited through action. According to post-left, lifestyle standards, simply claiming that public goods should not be owned, and that hierarchical authority is illegitimate, is not a sufficient anarchist statement. In order to better understand the position of post-left, lifestyle anarchists, one must recognize two main principles--"theory in practice" and the "revolution of everyday life".

The principle of theory in practice is essential to contemporary anarchist thought. Lifestyle anarchists tend to be action oriented, preferring to practice theory. Accused of being anti-intellectual, it is not a resistance to theory, but is an action-oriented philosophy that values experimentalism over speculation. The philosophy of revolution in everyday life, mentioned several times throughout this essay, argues that it is counter-productive to plan for a revolution in the future; one should be taking revolutionary actions in the present. This concept argues for extreme consciousness; the only way to change the world is to change everyday actions. It argues that dreams and subjective experiences are the ultimate tools of resistance. Crimethinc relies on these principles in the construction of their book.

### Anarchy and Property

Property is another hotly debated topic in anarchy. Anarchist Li Pen Kan (China, 1921) explained that property constitutes the basic inequality separating people in the world, and that private property is single handedly responsible for maintaining the existence of government (Graham 2005:358). Ricardo Flores Magon (Mexico, 1918) wrote that the earth is the property of all and that all private property titles are marked with blood because

property relies on seizure and violence (260). Errico Malatesta (Italy, 1907) believed that private property is what drives competition and class interest (209), and Peter Kropotkin (Russian, writing from a French prison, 1886) argued that many ‘crimes’ are instigated by the desire to possess someone else’s wealth (178).

It is not possible to find a unified stance regarding property in anarchist literature; multiple opinions abound. Anarchists pride themselves on the fact that no single person is their doctrinal father (few would call themselves Bakuninists), and the positions vary. The issues of private property generally concern the private ownership of the means of production, and a resistance to the concentration of wealth. When discussing issues of property, there is usually a distinction between private property and personal possession<sup>11</sup>, with an interest in a fair distribution of common resources and more flexibility regarding personal belongings. This leads to a broad, and slightly varied, consensus, that even if an individual may own private possessions, ownership of common resources should not be exclusive.

While many classical thinkers were situated in a particular global location and time, the central issue regarding anarchist conception of private property is the role of the state. According to anarchists, property and the state are intimately linked. While many social activists argue for a more just or fair state, anarchists argue that the state must be abolished. The state’s role is often to defend property seized by the favored class interest, and to punish individuals who either don’t respect the distribution of goods, or those whose seizure of property has been deemed illegitimate by the state (theft). Property ownership is enforced by the state, class interests inform state interests and, anarchists argue, as long as there is a state

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<sup>11</sup> Common resources often refer to land, water, and the means of production. Depending on the group, personal possessions include small-scale belongings such as books, clothes, and personal mementos. The classification of food, and food resources vary.

there will be class. Regardless of who runs the state, a class interest develops to support it. In this way, the state controls, legitimizes, and derives wealth from private property. When property is made common to the community, the state interest is challenged. Property relies on exclusion; the state privatizes common resources and restricts use. This is why anarchists claim, “all property is theft” (Proudhon 1994[1840]). Without the privatization of common resources, resource interests, maintenance, and consequences are shared.

In today’s context, these positions lend themselves to the world of intellectual property rights.

### Intellectual Property Rights

A contemporary manifestation of debates over property appears in discussions regarding Intellectual Property Rights, or, as Boyle calls it, “the second enclosure movement” (Boyle 2003).<sup>12</sup> The often-stated reasons for the existence of legalized Intellectual Property Rights is to encourage the process of invention and innovation, as well to stimulate innovators--the idea being that restricting reproduction will protect the author’s monetary rights, and will encourage innovation. This conception of exclusion and incentive developed over time, especially in the course of economic transitions (Anderson 2003; Price 1992). Today, the scope of copyright is expanding at record speed.<sup>13</sup> In the United States,

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<sup>12</sup> This debate reaches a life and death pitch regarding patenting in the biotechnology industry, and while there exists an extensive literature on this topic, I focus this paper purely on copyright. Please see University Inc. (Washburn) and Silent Theft (Bollier) for a comprehensive discussion of other intellectual property issues.

<sup>13</sup>In Copyright Law, expansion refers to duration. In America, a copyright is a limited right granted by Congress to authors and inventors. The original Copyright Act of 1790 established that a copyright term was 14 years, with the right for a still living author to renew the copyright for an additional 14 years once the first period expired. Over the next centuries, Congress added to these time periods, and today’s copyrights last for the life of the author, plus 70 years. (Twenty years added in 2002).

Thomas Jefferson believed that “inventions cannot, in nature, be a subject of property” and that property rights should only be granted in moments where innovation needed encouragement (Lemley 2004: 3). As the American economy transformed during the nineteenth century from primarily agricultural to more industrial, with a greater demand for books and other written sources, the perceived need for intellectual property right protection increased (Fisher 1999). Today, copyright, logos, patents, and other forms of intellectual property rights abound in most intellectual production.

Inadvertently, in challenging the capitalist system, anarchists are engaged with the growing movement against the unswerving restriction of intellectual property. As in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century debates discussing the role of real property and equal rights of occupation, anarchists today are examining the circumstances and consequences of ever-expanding Intellectual Property Rights. Intellectual Property (such as books, techniques, or ideas) is not like material or real property (such as real estate) in that an idea cannot be completely, exclusively kept intact.<sup>14</sup>

This debate is not exclusive to the radical front. Today, many researchers, intellectuals, and artists attempt to avoid restrictive copyright demands by participating in

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The “work” itself that falls under copyright law has been extended as well. In 1884 the Supreme Court added photographs to the list of “works” that could be copyrighted. In 1971, Congress included musical recordings (not simply compositions, but the recordings themselves). In the late 1970s, computer software was added to the list, and, in 1990, architectural works became protected. Searching the FEDCOURTS database, Lemley found that the even the usage of the word “Intellectual Property” has gone up- finding it used 201 times in Court documents in the years between 1943 and 1953, and 3, 863 times in the years between 1993-2003 (Lemley 2004:6).

<sup>14</sup> Lumley argues there is a fundamental difference between real property and intellectual property and that the conflation of the two is a fundamental misunderstanding of the issues of real property- which are to limit the creation of uncompensated externalities (harms that one person’s use of land does to another’s interest in it) and eliminate free-riding. He explains that the externalities of intellectual property, as opposed to more general property, are positive, and “property theory offers little or no justification for internalizing positive externalities” (Lemley 2004). He argues that “free riding” is desired when it comes to Intellectual productions.

various flexible copyright programs. One organization is the Creative Commons, who describe themselves as a “nonprofit organization that offers flexible copyright licenses for creative works” ([www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org)). They explain, “Creative Commons licenses provide a flexible range of protections and freedoms for authors, artists, and educators. We have built upon the "all rights reserved" concept of traditional copyright to offer a voluntary "some rights reserved" approach.” Other groups attempting to tackle these issues include those experimenting with the Fair Share model. A group called ‘CopyNight’ is a nationally organized monthly social gathering for those who are interested in restoring balance in copyright law.

### Open Source Coding

Intellectual property rights have gained ground, and evoked debate in recent years regarding the protection of software. Issues regarding software and computer programming frequently attract the attention of contemporary anarchists.<sup>15</sup>

Protecting software is a complex and elusive undertaking, and concepts have changed over time. For example, algorithms used to be legally considered “phenomena of nature” and therefore unpatentable, but this is no longer true (Fisher 1999). Today, the law argues that the code itself (for example, a Microsoft Word source code is a trade secret) cannot be taught, but if the number is ascertained without stealing (often through “reverse engineering”-performing arithmetic manipulation of other numbers issued by Microsoft), then the discovery is permissible.

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<sup>15</sup> There are several links between programmers and anarchists, and I hope to explore these connections further in the future. For now, I can only speculate on the reasons. One connection may be due to the fact that anarchists strive for self-reliance and frequently program and run their own websites. Another reason is that software programming can provide temporary employment contracts to those who resist steady employment. Even when permanent, programming can be a job that supports anarchist principles.

Source code is software instructions written in various programming language. Compiled in textual format, mathematical format, or combinations thereof, it is later translated into binary code to be interpreted by the computer. Not simply a non-literary form of composition, source codes are “interacting collections of hardware, software, and human beings”(Moglen 1999: 5). It is humans who maintain and improve the system, and it is this human interaction that leads to the specific argument that software should not be restricted through property protection laws. Moglen explains:

“The function of source code in relation to other human beings is not widely grasped by non-programmers, who tend to think of computer programs as incomprehensible. They would be surprised to learn that the bulk of information contained in most programs is, from the point of view of the compiler or other language processor, “comment”, that is, non-functional material. The comments, of course, are addressed to others who may need to fix a problem or to alter or enhance the program’s operation. In most programming languages, far more space is spent in telling people what the program does than in telling the computer how to do it” (5).

The function of source code illustrates the necessity of sharing information in order to preserve innovation and develop better programs. This is an overt example of what happens with all knowledge production - it builds on itself through human interaction. Assigning strict copyright laws to items such as software is likely to lead to restrictions on the comments, delaying the modification of bad software.

True to its name, open source programming is programming left open, free for all who want to edit and contribute. The term ‘Copyleft’ originated in open- source programming circles, but is now frequently used by anarchists. One definition of copyleft describes it as “ a notice giving the public legal permission to redistribute a program or other work of art” ([www.linux-france.org/article/appli/emacs/manuel/html/glossary.html](http://www.linux-france.org/article/appli/emacs/manuel/html/glossary.html)).<sup>16</sup> A

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<sup>16</sup> Linux is a free, open- source operating system based on Unix.

word play on copyright, copyleft grants use and reproduction rights to everyone<sup>17</sup>.

Frequently, software programmers argue that copyrights take away freedoms, while copyleft preserves them.

Programmers argue, “It is a legal instrument that requires those who pass on a program to include the rights to use, modify, and redistribute the code; the code and the freedoms become legally inseparable”( [www.rjsystems.nl/en/3500.php](http://www.rjsystems.nl/en/3500.php)). Fully aware of the political implications of free use and reproduction rights, the Linux programmers argue, “Copyleft is used by left-wing programmers to promote freedom and cooperation, just as copyrights are used by right-wing programmers to gain power over other people” ([www.linux-france.org/article/appli/emacs/manuel/html/glossary.html](http://www.linux-france.org/article/appli/emacs/manuel/html/glossary.html)).

Legally, the designations rejecting copyright differ; while copyleft provides some legal protection to the programmers, anti-copyright has no legal meaning. Intentions also vary. Some rejection of copyright rejects all restrictions on use, others limit use to non-profit organizations, and others allow for distribution but still maintain credit for authorship.

Contemporary anarchists build on this point, either through their own programming experience or through inspiration by the concept that ideas need to be shared to grow. Many contemporary anarchist organizations participate in various forms of copyright rejection.

Some examples include:

On the Institute for Anarchist Studies website:

*Copyleft 2005 Institute for Anarchist Studies (<http://www.anarchist-studies.org>)*

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<sup>17</sup> The application of copyright protection varies. Some Linux programming packages are copyrighted and available for sale.

On the publishing page in “Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfucker”:

*“@ This book is @nti-copyrighted under the Berne, Baby, Berne convention.<sup>18</sup> Any portion maybe produced by any means necessary, as permitted under the Copy-Cat Riot Actions, 1981, 1985, and 1990” (Hahne 1993)*

On the publishing page in Crimethinc’s “Recipes for Disaster”:

*“N©! 2005. The publishers, the notorious Crimethinc ex-Workers Collective, humbly put this book and al its contents at the disposal of those who, in good faith, might read, circulate, plagiarize, revise, and otherwise make use of them in the course of making the world a better place. Possession, reproduction, transmission, excerpting, introductions as evidence in court, and all other applications by any corporation, government body, security organization, or similar party of evil intent are strictly prohibited and punishable under natural law” (Crimethinc 2005).*

On the Schnews website:

*“@nti copyright - information for action - copy and distribute!”(www.schnews.org.uk/)*

Because of the treatment of the products of intellectual production as owned--as real property, anarchists place a historical claim against the ownership of ideas, and have taken a stand regarding many of these issues.

These positions on intellectual property will be explored further through the book, Days of War, Nights of Love.

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<sup>18</sup> Internationally, the Berne Convention in the late 1800s set out the scope of copyright protection and is still in force to this day (Friedman 2005).

## Crimethinc

The Crimethinc Ex-Workers collective is a contemporary anarchist organization that publishes books (some of the more well known are: Days of War, Nights of Love, Recipes for Disaster, and Evasion) and magazines (Harbinger and Rolling Thunder), and manages a website ([www.crimethinc.com](http://www.crimethinc.com)). The name Crimethinc is a reference to Orwell's 1984 word- "Crimethink", and the collective is fluid, with often changing politics, principles, and participants. Even the given names of authors and participants are difficult to trace with participants falsifying names, removing names, and even swapping names on the Internet. As mentioned before, the authors frequently reiterate the point that one cannot join this group because of its decentralized nature. It is comprised of everybody who wants to participate, in his or her own location. An anonymous collective, most of the information about Crimethinc is provided through rumor and in their various publications. Inspired by these principles, there are many publications, particularly in the "zine"<sup>19</sup> world, that place the Crimethinc logo on their work, as a symbol of their participation. The Crimethinc website hosts many of the debates and discussions outlined in this paper, and offers opinions and articles regarding these ideas. The artwork provided on the website is often modified and posted in many communities.

There are anarchist principles behind the statements that one cannot join this organization, one is always already a member. The most primary and obvious is the emphasis on decentralized organizing practices that do not rely on a hierarchy of leaders. This reflects a larger view on organization, and makes a claim that centralized organization,

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<sup>19</sup> Zines are small, often homemade pamphlets or mini-magazines that are widely shared and distributed not only in the anarchist world, but also in most groups that believe in the politics of DIY (Do It Yourself). There are music zines, self health care zines, art zines, instructional gardening zines- everything imaginable.

such as the form found in state structures, are inherently violent and therefore unstable, unreliable, and irrelevant. If everybody is already a member and there is no governing group, then perhaps many forms of centralized organizing are also unnecessary. It is a claim that self-organization is not only legitimate but also possible.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, the Crimethinc Collective is a post-left, lifestyle-oriented anarchist collective. This is supported through their definition of anarchy as “an individual orientation to yourself and others... a personal approach to life” (Crimethinc 2001: 34). According to the collective, the most important part of anarchy is you. This reflects the individualist notion of emancipating the self before taking on the world.

I chose to examine a Crimethinc Collective book as a means to understand contemporary anarchist engagement with property rights. Contemporary anarchist writing relies on the principle of theory in practice- understanding the theory depends on examining the practice. I chose the book as an example of theory in practice, the act of putting into action anarchist principles. Crimethinc Collective’s engagement in the debate regarding lifestyle and social anarchism, and their position as a post-left anarchist collective, makes the collective a good representative of contemporary anarchy.

#### Days of War, Nights of Love

Of the many publications the Crimethinc Collective produces, I chose Days of War, Nights of Love for analysis because of its position as an introduction to contemporary anarchist thought, and its experimental format. The book is a primer in anarchist thought; not directly intended for those already enmeshed in anarchist activity. It is aimed for the young person who has had little exposure to these thoughts. The sub-title of the book articulates this when it says, “Crimethinc for beginners.”

The authors articulate anarchist principles using language and ideas, but also textual practices and images. Some of these textual practices include non-linear, non-standardized writing styles, a false geographical location, misattributed quotes and citations, and the frequent removal and disguise of authorship. A text of compiled documents; its various authors use their own names, screen names, or false names to designate their writing. In this paper, I argue that while the removal of an author's name is sometimes for protective reasons (for fear of legal or criminal repercussions) the Crimethinc Collective's removal of the author is also a stance against the ownership of knowledge and the commodification of ideas. It reflects the anarchist drive to express theory in practice.

Days of War, Nights of Love represents a solution to the major challenges of how to inform the public while avoiding leadership, celebrity, and vanguardism. Concerned that revolutionary leaders could take positions of leadership and domination after the revolution, anarchists have traditionally rejected anything that advocates vanguardism or a transitional power structure. A primary difference between anarchist and other revolutionary forms of thought is that anarchists resist on principle the idea of a small group of intellectual elites stepping forward and creating a revolution. An anarchist would say, a revolution should not be made for the people's sake, but should be made by the people. Denying the possibility of positive leadership by an identifiable cadre is a difficulty anarchists find necessary. Crimethinc Collective attempts to address it in an almost traditional anarchist way- by resisting establishing themselves as a clearly identified group. From their vantage point, words need to be said, but the creation of a class of leaders is both counter-revolutionary and counter-anarchist.

The back cover of Days of War, Nights of Love reads, “Crimethinc is an international ‘workers’ collective’ of men and women who are not willing to be mere ‘workers’ anymore. Are you?” A professionally bounded paperback, the book places primary emphasis on the experience of the reader. Intended as a critique of the capitalist system, and organized alphabetically, the authors cover topics such as morality, social class, identity, gender, and work. A 292-page, glossy cover book with illustrations, history lessons, and philosophical essays, Days of War, Nights of Love was self-published in 2001<sup>20</sup>. Though the number of copies in circulation is difficult to estimate, the book is incredibly popular in anarchist circles around the world. It is reproduced, without pictures, on Crimethinc’s website ([www.crimethinc.com](http://www.crimethinc.com)), making it available to anyone with access to a computer.

#### Refusal of Intellectual Property Rights in Days of War, Nights of Love

Falling right before the title page, the publishing page of a book outlines the rights reserved by copyright. The publishing page in Days of War, Nights of Love looks like any other book, with information about where the book was printed and how to order from the publisher. The distinction is the copyright line. Saying, “Plagiarized © 2001 by CrimethInc. Free Press”, it goes on to disclaim:

“English language (and all applications thereof) used without permission from its inventors, writers, or copywriters. No rights reserved. All parts of this book may be reproduced and transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, especially including photocopying if it is done at the expense of some unsuspecting corporation. Other recommended methods include broadcasting readings over pirate radio, reprinting tracts in unwary newspapers, and just signing your own name to this and publishing is as your own work. Any claim relating to copyright infringement, advocacy of illegal activities, defamation of character, incitement to riot, treason,

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<sup>20</sup> While descriptions such as “glossy cover” and “professionally bound” seem redundant, they are remarkable in anarchist literature because, aside from Crimethinc productions, anarchist books are often hand-crafted, with low quality covering and binding. Crimethinc books are significant in this regard, with clean bindings and professional looking covers. This level of professionalism can also draw suspicion amongst contemporary anarchists.

etc. should be addressed directly to your Congressperson as a military rather than civil issue” (3).

As mentioned earlier in this paper, copyright protection has been extended automatically to all literary publications. The only possibility for denial of “protection” is to clearly state it. It must be articulated if the object is *not* owned, rather than owned. Property ownership as assumed is another way capitalism has neutralized its existence; private property is implicitly assumed. In this way, Crimethinc engages in direct action through their explicit refusal of what has become taken for granted.

Several lines in the paragraph outlining the rights reserved (or denied) by Crimethinc require a closer look. The first line states, “English language (and all applications thereof) used without permission from its inventors, writers or copywriters. No rights reserved”(3). The statement being made is that even the most basic of the book’s resources, language, is shared. English, as a language, may have a standard format, but the ability to use it is reserved for all people. A ridiculous statement, it highlights the arbitrariness of boundaries drawn between intellectual properties that can be owned, and those that cannot. It raises the issue: if ideas can be owned, why not language?

The next line says, “All parts of this book may be reproduced and transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, especially including photocopying if it is done at the expense of some unsuspecting corporation”(3). Encouraging plagiarism and theft, the statement lists several ideas for reproduction. As this paper has done in earlier sections, Crimethinc authors, Tristran Tzarathustra and Stella Nera, link the concepts of private property and intellectual property, and explain:

“The concept of intellectual property is ingrained in the collective psychosis even deeper than the concept of material property. Plenty of thinkers have asserted that ‘property is theft’ in regard to real estate and other physical capital, but few have

dared to make similar statements about their own ideas. Even the most notoriously “radical” thinkers have still proudly claimed their ideas as, first and foremost, *their* ideas” (179).<sup>21</sup>

Arguing that the origin of intellectual material is incidental and impossible to truly ascertain, Crimethinc claims that plagiarism re-directs the focus back on the actual ideas. An effective method for reorganizing and stimulating new ideas, Crimethinc argues that plagiarism ” is revolutionary in that it does not recognize ‘intellectual property’ rights but rather strikes out against them and all of the negative effects that recognizing them can have” (181).

Encouraging plagiarism at the expense of an unsuspecting corporation is another stance on restrictive ownership. Theft, as a practice, is addressed in several portions of the book. Crimethinc argues that money is an exchange product of labor, time, and creativity. Paying for something with money that one has supposedly earned through work means trading for a product or service that would not otherwise be shared. Crimethinc argues that this is a relationship of violence, not predicated on respect or concern for one another’s needs, but on the economic forces that have brought buyer and seller together. With shoplifting, and other challenges to exclusive ownership, the participants actively refuse to engage in a commoditized form of exchange economy. Crimethinc argues that, along with the benefit of gaining necessities, theft reflects a change in a person’s orientation to the world and life in general. When ownership is re-assessed, and the legitimacy of market distribution is scrutinized, one is forced to notice the myths invented to support the capitalist system.

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<sup>21</sup> The unlabeled reference to Proudhon’s statement, “Property is theft” will be examined further in the next section, but it is important to mention that a footnote is attached to this quote saying, “This is actually a problematic assertion, since the judgment “theft is wrong” depends upon the assumption “respecting property is right” (179).” Crimethinc’s disavowal of morality when it comes to social practices is outside the scope of this paper.

This is similar to Abbie Hoffman's point in Steal This Book. He argues that within the capitalist system, even the objects of discontent are manufactured and sold. According to Hoffman, *not* stealing from capitalist institutions is the immoral act. He explains that the only way to confront the self-legitimizing hypocrisy of the state is through a re-distribution of power and goods. Stealing from the castles of capitalism "implies that the reader is already 'ideologically set,' in that he understands corporate feudalism as the only robbery worthy of being called "crime," for it is committed against the people as a whole" (Hoffman 1996[1970]: XXII). Challenging the legitimacy of the state as someone who can identify and define theft, Hoffman goes on to show his readers strategies of direct action that allow one to live outside, or partially outside, the consumer culture.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, consider the last sentence of the copyright disclaimer: "Any claim relating to copyright infringement, advocacy of illegal activities, defamation of character, incitement to riot, treason, etc. should be addressed directly to your Congressperson as a military rather than civil issue". Here, Crimethinc points to those who actually enforce property rights-- the government. As in classical anarchy, the government is viewed as the arbitrator of property rights. Any engagement with the rights of property is also a tacit acceptance of government, something an anarchist cannot tolerate.

The private ownership of knowledge goes against several anarchist principles . Most pertinent is the stance that a person does not develop ideas independently. The world, the community, the educational background, and the specific daily exposures an individual

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<sup>22</sup> As mentioned throughout this essay, Crimethinc is concerned about reproducing the existing system by using the tools of the system to critique it. This includes placing an individual in a leadership position, and ignoring issues of gender, race, and class. Crimethinc, in its concern over process, is careful to avoid the leadership position Hoffman maintains through authorship and appearance, as well as refuse to use male-centered language to express sentiments intended for all.

encounters all lead to the formation of ideas. Rejecting the concept that a person is autonomously responsible for innovation, many contemporary anarchists regard ideas as a commons in itself. Based on the principle that the commons should not be owned, anarchists argue that ideas should not be placed in positions of limited access and exclusivity. This rejection of owned knowledge manifests as a rejection of intellectual property rights.

Anarchists also reject copyright because of a priority of distribution. The practice of the theory both embodies the rejection of the ownership of ideas, and the extreme importance of distribution. Any protection might hinder distribution, and thus the development of new ideas and the spread of familiar ones.

Crimethinc attempts to highlight the role of government as the manager of ideas when explicitly rejecting copyright. Rejecting the government's position as legitimate conservator of ideas is different than arguing that the system needs to be reformed, and that intellectual property should not be commodified to the extent that it is. Rather, by making the lack of foundation visible, anarchists endeavor to reject the capitalist system.

### The Plurality of Authorship

Building on the logic of plagiarism, Crimethinc suggests that conceptions of authorship are also rife with illusions. Not only does Crimethinc refuse to fix meaning, time, and place in its work, it also refuses to fix authorship. Through omission of all attributable names, Crimethinc illustrates that no text is reducible to a single meaning, or to a single source. They explain:

“The signing of a work is a part of the creative process: it offers a context in which the work will be interpreted. What signature could truly capture the complete origins of a work, anyway, considering all the disparate and ancient components that make up any given work of art, and all the human relations and innovations that were necessary to arrive at them? For that matter, if the notion of the fixed, distinct

identity of individuals is also a superstition, that renders even the possibility of an individual signature preposterous! If one wanted to be honest, one would sign the name of one's entire civilization to one's poetry or pottery, and add to that the seal of the cosmos from which it arose- effectively communalizing the work" (Crimethinc 2001: 185).

Crimethinc, in removing the identity of the authors, makes explicit the plurality of both authorship and meaning. As mentioned earlier, Crimethinc explains that because of the impossibility a single author, all work is plagiarized. Crimethinc expresses the belief in the commons of knowledge by claiming that all ideas have been remorselessly stolen and adjusted, and they encourage the reader to do the same (11). Making explicit the theft that has already occurred demonstrates the illusion of private ownership of knowledge, and the violence of intellectual property rights.

Crimethinc, through its disregard for conventions of authorship and through explicit text, claims that authorship enforces untenable acceptance of expertise, authority, and ownership. The author, or the publisher who has paid the author, owns the words, and is often placed in a position of being the primary formulator of the ideas, a position that encourages adulation, an attitude that strikes Crimethinc as dangerous. The collective explains, "At worst, the cult of personality that develops around famous thinkers prevents any useful consideration of their ideas or artwork; hero-worshipping partisans will swear allegiance to a thinker and all his thoughts"(179). They go on to explain that this emphasis on the "author-owner" actually reduces the amount of attention paid to the actual propositions or artwork. While they do not deny that individuals who produce a work or a piece of art are often interesting, they resist the position of an individual innovator.

Crimethinc opposes the ownership of creative literary and artistic forms in order to reject the authority attributed to the figure of the artist or author. They argue that frequently

names are associated with ideas, and authors are placed in the position of expert- the only ones capable of innovation.<sup>23</sup> Crimethinc explains, “Consequently we are dependent upon others for many of our ideas, and must be content as spectators of their creative work” (180). They expand the argument by claiming that if the creator/owner occupies the position of an innovator, then the work cannot be interpreted, picked through, and revised. They explain that, “Mummified as they are, many theories become completely irrelevant to modern existence, when they could have been given a new lease on life by being treated with a little less reverence”(180).

Barthes’ idea of the death of the author resonates here. He argued, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Barthes 1968). Suggesting that in removing the author, we are removing the position of “author-God”, he explains that this realization “liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law” (Barthes 1968). In removing the author the text is no longer closed, deciphering the words to uncover the author’s meaning becomes futile and redundant. In deleting authorship, Crimethinc attempts to place primary focus on the reader, rather than the author/owner/father.

### Text as subject: The Cultural Politics of Knowledge

I have already examined the initial pages of Days of War, Nights of Love as an expression of contemporary anarchism’s rejection of privatized knowledge. In this section I examine how the remainder of the book serves to convey and maintain this understanding.

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<sup>23</sup> Using the example of the artist, they argue that s/he is often placed in a position of eccentric visionary, existing at the edge of society, and is fundamentally different than “normal”. This idea denies that anyone can be an artist, and holds that the position of “artist” (or writer, or musician, or philosopher) is limited and reserved only for the truly special, or the expertly trained.

Days of War, Nights of Love, as an example of theory in practice, does more than simply reject the principles of ownership; it develops a writing style that articulates this message. In order to resist passive consumption, linear organization, and ownership through singular authorship, the post-left, lifestyle anarchists engage in the principle of everyday revolution, and create a world in which these structures do not exist. These, as well as the writing practices previously presented, are examples of how Crimethinc is carrying out a cultural politics of knowledge.

A non-anarchist example is useful in understanding the cultural politics of knowledge in Days of War, Nights of Love. Rich's feminist analysis of the university is similar to Crimethinc Collective's critique of the literary structures.

When examining the university system, Adrienne Rich argued that there were many ways to elevate the position of women. Suggestions from feminists at the time were to hire more female professors, critically engage women's issues in lectures, and disallow the relegation of women to positions of exception and otherness. Still, Rich argued, none of these reforms address the underlying structure of the university. She explained that what really needed to be examined was hierarchy itself. Simply elevating the position of women without addressing the issue of hierarchy would be ineffective, argues Rich, because it will still conform to a patriarchal standard that replicates itself through privileging maleness, promoting the illusion of objectivity, and following hierarchical standards. Without a structural analysis, women will collude with the university to maintain the patriarchal hierarchy that serves to reproduce the existing circumstances (Rich 1979).

Althusser, in a similar move to that of Rich, uses the University as an exemplar of the naturalization of the tenets of the capitalist system.<sup>24</sup> He explains that rationality, a particular form of thinking, has become so validated that it is assumed and therefore invisible. He explains:

"The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology... where teachers respectful of the 'conscience' and 'freedom' of the children who are entrusted to them ... by their 'parents' ... open up for them the path to the freedom, morality, and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature, and their 'liberating' virtues" (Althusser 1970: 105-106).

Similarly, Bourdieu suggested that when a scientist argues for objectivity, thereby seeming to remove himself, he is simply relying upon his class position, because his class derived behavior is accepted as exemplifying intellectual capital and thus, is still there, even when invisible (Bourdieu 2004). It is the invisible, naturalized, girders of the structure that must be exposed when examining a system for its own unconscious reproduction.

Days of War, Nights of Love, in short, resists the tools of the system in order to critique it. This approach is more finely realized than in older pieces of anarchist writing. A comparison of Days of War Nights of Love with older revolutionary writing illustrates Rich's position about unintended reproduction of the existing system. The anarchist Emma Goldman, editor of the journal *Mother Earth* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, presented her case rationally and organized her thoughts linearly. Distributed from 1906-1918, the journal discussed issues such as birth control, labor claims, prison experiences, and women's rights. Considered radical subject matter, the ideas were offered in an organized format, with clear

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<sup>24</sup> Althusser was, in many ways, antithetical to anarchy, with an interest in a totalizing scientific commitment to social understanding. Still, his words are useful, even if their intention is opposite.

academic language. For example, an advertisement selling tickets for Emma Goldman's upcoming speaking tour asks questions such as, "ARE YOU alive to the burning problems of the time? DO YOU want a freer, better, and happier world?" (Goldman 1916). Goldman, through a ticketed event, provided answers to these questions. At this time, anarchy had not developed a sophisticated critique of how textual formats positioned the reader. While the topics were revolutionary, the ideas were still presented using standardized means- by an expert leader through a staged presentation.

Days of War, Nights of Love resists this older format.<sup>25</sup> The authors might argue that their predecessors, including Goldman, were reproducing the existing system by using its standards to assess legitimacy. In summarizing Althusser, Mary Klages argues, "All texts interpellate readers by some mechanism, in some ways; all texts create subject positions for readers, whether that construction of subject positions is obvious or not" (Klages 2001). Crimethinc seems to have self-consciously considered how Days of War, Nights of Love might "interpellate" its readers and adjusted the format accordingly.

### The Reader's Position

In discussing the heterogeneity of speech genres, Bakhtin identified the position of the reader as crucial and argued for a "sense of the listener as a partner-interlocutor" (Bakhtin 1986[1979]: 66). Conceived as a partner, Crimethinc identifies the reader as a participant in the production of their book. The first page of Days of War, Nights of Love is a caution, warning the reader against commodifying their dissent and reproducing the system. They

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<sup>25</sup> This difference, and Crimethinc's almost reactionary approach to traditional anarchist formats, once again highlights the tension between historic and contemporary anarchists. Their reaction may also reflect a difference in class positions. Not exactly a participant in the classical canon of anarchy, Emma Goldman was lower-middle class, a female, and a Russian immigrant. The Crimethinc Collective, through a few signifying clues and personal communication, are often native to America, gender mixed, and, some, through access to computers, publishing skills, and high theory, are presumably from an advantaged class background. In fact, this is the primary critique of Crimethinc.

explain, “Today there is a booming discontent industry, consisting of entrepreneurs who cash in on your misery by selling you products that describe and decry it...your real desires to make something happen are channeled into consuming” (Crimethinc 2000: 1). The authors express concern that the book, which sells for around \$12 in the United States, is participating in this industry. Crimethinc attempts to address this is by making the consumer position of the book explicit, and by placing responsibility on the reader to maintain this awareness. Already the reader is an active co-conspirator.

The second page of Days of War, Nights of Love is a scattered list of questions. Similar to the questions presented by Emma Goldman in *Mother Earth*, they deal with discontent, lack of control, and human desire. But there is an immediate distinction. The questions are not presented in the context of an advertisement to hear a famous anarchist speak, nor are they organized in a linear fashion on the page. They are slightly jumbled and spread across two pages (see Fig. 1), suggesting a resistance to the commodification of celebrity activists and the linear presentation of ideas.

Most of the questions regard alienation in some form. Some questions are: “How many dollars an hour does it take to pay you to stay inside and sell things or file papers? How much of your life comes at you through a screen, vicariously? How are you affected by holding back you desires?” (2-3). Guy Debord explains that the spectacle is a collection of images, with life being a social relation mediated by these images. Situating books within the world of the spectacle, Debord argues, “In all societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved into a representation” (Debord 1983[1967]: 1). This gaze, and the willingness to consume the spectacle’s offerings, is affirmation of the

legitimacy of passive consumption. Debord explains, “The spectacle’s form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system’s conditions and goals”(6).

Crimethinc resists spectacular consumption through demonstrating the embodiment (or lack of) of the capitalist experience. They say, “Think about your direct bodily experience. No one can lie to you about that”(2). On the first page the reader was forced to take responsibility for how s/he will be reading the book, on the second page the reader is reminded of how his or her own bodily experience is the ultimate critique of capitalism. The book is highlighting in its very beginning that the reader already knows and understands all of the content of the book that is about to be presented, and that an authoritative explanation is unnecessary.

#### Disruption of Standardization and Linearity in Days of War, Nights of Love

The transformation of the reader from passive consumer to active participant is Crimethinc’s primary objective. For this purpose, Crimethinc’s writing disrupts the typical consumption of the capitalist product. Often the reader is forced to receive several messages at once, and engage with all. The authors try to make it impossible to sit back and read passively. In Roland Barthes’s terms, the authors have transformed the book from object to subject, to a methodological field that allows for engagement within the text (Barthes 1971). In this way there is a distinction between what displayed (work) is, and what demonstrated (text) is. Days of War, Nights of Love is a methodological work, meant to be open<sup>26</sup> and interpreted, rather than passively received.

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<sup>26</sup> The phrase, ‘open text’, refers to the idea that texts can be interpreted in many ways, and relies on the comprehensive collaboration of the reader. The idea of an open work is most familiar in reference to musical compositions, with autonomy left to the individual performer in her choice of how to play. Umberto Eco has argued that texts also contain different degrees of openness, often depending on the intentions of the original author (Eco 1979). Computer software programmers have built on similar

Cartoons, present on almost every page, are the most visible tactic used by Crimethinc to disrupt standardization. In this way, humor and creativity are constantly injected. True to post-left, lifestyle anarchy, Crimethinc argues for the carnival, the immediate, and the action-oriented. In literary form, cartooning is a way to inject this principle.

In re-writing familiar cartoons and images, Crimethinc playfully comments on society. For example, the cartoon “Dilbert” illustrates the ridiculousness and arbitrariness of the office. Crimethinc’s version challenges such a weak criticism of corporate power (Fig. 2). Other cartoons take classic images from comic book cartooning, particularly gendered representations, and re-appropriate the roles (Fig. 3). Throughout the book, cartooning serves to illustrate ideas, and to challenge the concepts and critiques offered by mainstream media.

Another form of disruption occurs through highly stylized representation. This includes a variety of templates (handwriting, mapping, and upside-down writing) and shifts in presentation (linear writing, interviews, transcribed conversations, history lessons, and personal editorials). These kinds of disruptions serve to lighten the reader’s load, better explain complex issues, disrupt the linearity of the book, and de-formalize thought.

The most consistent disruptions in Days of War, Nights of Love, are the history lessons. Peppered throughout, the history lessons read as a book within a book. Denouncing history as, a crippling *chain* of events, Crimethinc argues that in prehistoric times history was not linear, that it repeated itself in circular cycles, and was endlessly renewed and unique.

(17). They explain, “Just as there were no national borders or trends of global

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ideas and developed programs, such as Mosaic, that are interactive. Because of Crimethinc’s insistence on the reader’s role as collaborator, and its participation in a website that engages in debate regarding the book, I argue that it is open.

standardization, time was not bound by any one law or system”(17). Crimethinc argues that the discipline of history regulates experiences, and standardizes moments. By placing historical presentations throughout the book, in spurts and interruptions, they are attempting to illustrate the actual experience of history. Crimethinc’s historical representation is an example of theory in practice. Crimethinc is not simply talking about what history should look like; they put historical representation into action.

Texts turned in different directions emphasize issues Crimethinc especially wants to de-stabilize. In the chapter, “C is for Capitalism”, three pages are titled, “Enough abstractions! Let’s talk about real life! Actual testimony by a real life member of the working proletariat!”(82). The upside-down pages are an editorial, from the perspective of the worker, on the constant barrage of capitalism through advertisements and products. Another upside down section is labeled “H is for History turned upside down” (118), and is titled, “Postscript: If Not Now, Then When”. It is a denouncement of the Christian emphasis on delayed gratification through heaven. In interrupting their own critique of history to critique the Christian trajectory of a more fulfilling life after death, Crimethinc is able to illustrate through words, and through the act of interrupting, a rejection of this order of events. In the section titled, “H is for Hypocrisy”, placed sideways in the book, is a passage titled, “Exhibit A: Crimethinc Itself ‘insINC.ere’” (130). This passage lists the hypocrisies of the Crimethinc organization itself, such as selling advertisements in a magazine they publish, in order to be able to publish it. These interruptions serve the purpose of jogging the reader into paying particular attention to important points.

Maps are also used to de-stabilize linearity. They are used to challenge the legitimacy of designated and regulated space. In the section titled, “S is for Space”, a global image is

presented from the perspective of the North Pole. Located in a section sub-titled “Alienation: The Map of Despair”, Crimethinc asserts that control is imposed on individuals through designating spaces. They argue that capitalism has attempted to colonize all locations and times through regulation. They explain, “There are fewer and fewer free, undeveloped spaces left in the world where we can let our bodies and minds run free. Almost every place you can go belongs to some person or group which has already designated a meaning and prescribed a use for” (205). With words superimposed over the map, definitions and ideas are placed on the continents. Making a connection between the standardization of place and time, they argue that:

“Our time is as thoroughly occupied and regulated as our space; indeed, the subdivision of our space is a manifestation of what has already happened to our time. The entire world moves and lives according to a standardized time system, designed to synchronize our movements from one side of the planet to the other” (207). By super-imposing ideas over the familiar, though slightly off center image of a map, Crimethinc is able to disrupt the typical reading of space by interrupting the consumption of images that usually serve to define it.

Two more maps are in the form of poetry. These poems articulate the principle of revolution in every day life, which battles standardization with emotion and subjective experience. The first has a poem sketched onto a map of the Eastern United States and Western Europe, with stanzas on various spatial locals. The second is an upside down street map of Greensboro, NC, with distances measured in heartbeats and kisses. They explain, “Our present maps describe a world no human being has ever set foot in: a world of carefully measured distances and standardized symbols, frozen in time, empty of emotional ambiances- an *objective* world, when today we all know that there is no world but the *subjective*” (211). The maps exist purely as images, without directive time or space. Not

intended for directional purposes, Crimethinc's maps serve to disrupt and contest the illusion of standardized space, and the capitalist system the manages it.

The final two maps represent familiar places transposed into mental experience. The first is a map of the cartographer's mind, illustrating how alienation, displacement, freedom, and individuality are processed. The second shows the mapmaker's home in relation to a decomposing raccoon carcass. Identifying several routes taken while walking around the home, in relation to how the carcass has decomposed, illustrates the passage of time. The mapmaker explains, "My orientation shifted from where to when, not the theoretical when of a calendar, but a visceral when confirmed by the smell of a decaying raccoon"(219). The maps Crimethinc presents on these pages are an attempt to illustrate the many options of mapping that are beyond the standardized conventions of mapping and so disrupt the taken-for-granted idea of a map.

The Crimethinc Collective, influenced by the inclusive ideas of the Neoists and Situationists (who proclaimed that everybody is everything), and by the punk music explosion (illustrating that expertise is not required to make music), has created a book putting contemporary anarchist principles into action. What was initially an experiment in expression is transformed into a dialogue with many voices and inspired by many times and places.

### Conclusion

I have examined one of Crimethinc's most popular books as a set of explicit discourses and writing practices. My purpose has been to further understanding of contemporary anarchist interventions in the cultural politics of property. Classical anarchist thought developed a critique of private property based on 19<sup>th</sup> century agrarian communal ideas.

Contemporary anarchy continues the attack on private property as the institution has been extended to intellectual “property”. Days of War Nights of Love reflects and expands upon older anarchist principles of resistance to property and employs anarchist tactics for disrupting the capitalist process through its treatment of expert knowledge, intellectual ownership, and legitimate authority.

Contemporary anarchists continue the struggle against property in other domains as well. They have been especially active in mounting challenges to “ownership” of living spaces and to control of public property. Already, anarchists, and others involved in community gardens, Really Really Free Markets, Critical Mass bike rides, and illicit squats are challenging, through direct action, the concepts of privilege, owned space, and exclusive property. In future research, I hope to explore squats and land occupations as principled seizures of unoccupied public property and thereby expand understanding of the continuing development of anarchist cultural frames and efforts to live in a world where the capitalist concept of exclusive property ownership has been de-naturalized and challenged.

## Appendix

**Think about your direct bodily experience of life. No one can lie to you about that.**

How many hours a day do you spend in front of a television screen? A computer screen? Behind an automobile windshield? All three screens combined?

**What are you being screened from?**

How much of your life comes at you through a screen, vicariously? (Is watching things as exciting as *doing* things? Do you have enough time to do all the things that you want to? Do you have enough energy to?)

And how many hours a day do you sleep? How are you affected by standardized time, designed solely to synchronize your movements with those of millions of other people? How long do you ever go without knowing what time it is? Who or what controls your minutes and hours?

**The minutes and hours that add up to your life?**

Can you put a value on a beautiful day, when the birds are singing and people are walking around together? How many dollars an hour does it take to pay you to stay inside and sell things or file papers? What will you get later that could make up for this day of your life?

How are you affected by being in crowds, by being surrounded by anonymous masses? Do you find yourself blocking your emotional responses to other human beings?

And who prepares your meals? Do you ever eat by yourself? Do you ever eat standing up? How much do you know about what you eat and where it comes from? How much do you trust it?

What are we deprived of by labor-saving devices? By thought-saving devices? How are you affected by the requirements of efficiency, which place value on the product rather than the process, on the future rather than the present, the present moment that is getting shorter and shorter as we speed faster and faster into the future? What are we speeding towards?

**Are we saving time? Saving it up for what?**

How are you affected by being moved around in prescribed paths, in elevators, buses, subways, escalators, on highways and sidewalks? By moving, working, and living in two- and three-dimensional grids? How are you affected by being organized, immobilized, and scheduled... instead of wandering, roaming freely and spontaneously? Scavenging? (Shoplifting?)

How much freedom of movement do you have—freedom to move through space, to move as far as you want, in new and unexplored directions?

And how are you affected by waiting? Waiting in line, waiting in traffic, waiting to eat, waiting for the bus, waiting for the bathroom—learning to punish and ignore your spontaneous urges?

**How are you affected by holding back your desires?**

By sexual repression, by the delay or denial of pleasure, starting in childhood, along with the suppression of everything in you that is spontaneous, everything that evidences your wild nature, your membership in the animal kingdom?

**Is pleasure dangerous? Could danger be joyous?**

Do you ever need to see the sky? (Can you see stars in it any more?) Do you ever need to see water, leaves, foliage, animals? Glimting, glimmering, moving?

Is that why you have a pet, an aquarium, houseplants? Or are television and video your glinting, glimmering, moving?

**How much of your life comes at you through a screen, vicariously?**

Do videotapes of yourself and your friends fascinate you, as if you are somehow more real in image than in life?

If your life was made into a movie, would it be worth watching? And how do you feel in situations of enforced passivity? How are you affected by a non-stop assault of symbolic communication—audio, visual, print, billboard, computer, video, radio, robotic voices—as you wander through the forest of signs? What are they urging upon you?

Do you ever need solitude, quiet, contemplation? Do you remember it? Thinking on your own, rather than reacting to stimuli? Is it hard to lock away?

**Is looking away the very thing that is not permitted?**

Where can you go to find silence and solitude? Not white noise, but pure silence? Not loneliness, but gentle solitude? How often have you stopped to ask yourself questions like these? Do you find yourself committing acts of symbolic violence? Do you ever feel lonely in a way that words cannot even express?

**Do you ever feel ready to LOSE CONTROL?**

Figure 1

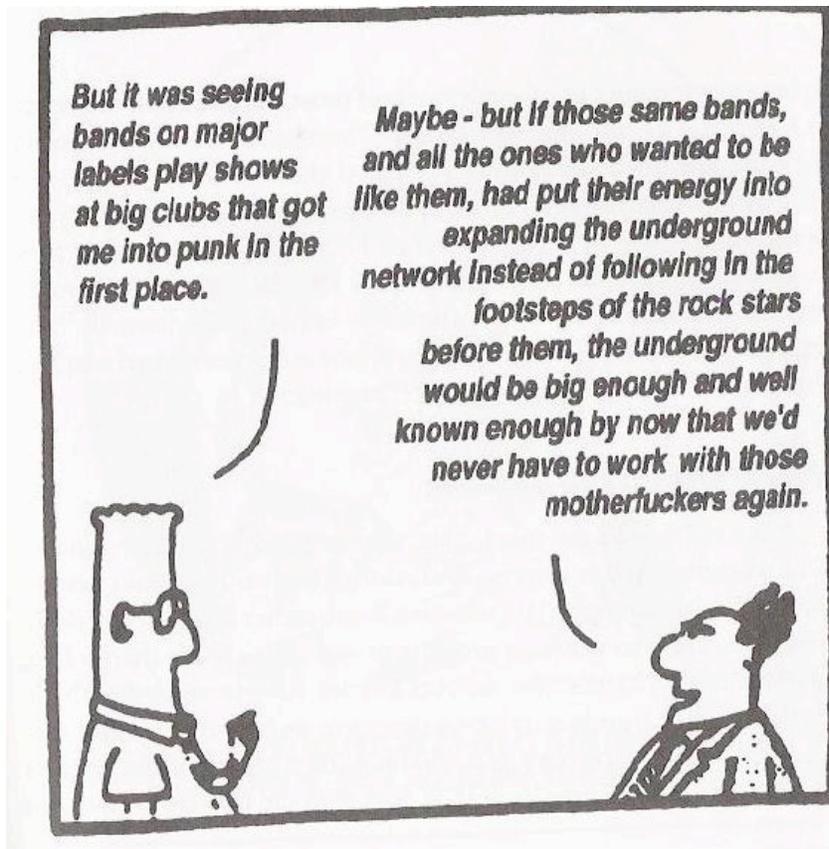


Figure 2



**Figure 3**

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