

“Every joke is a tiny revolution. If you had to define humour in a single phrase, you might define it as dignity sitting down on a tin-tack. Whatever destroys dignity, and brings down the mighty from their seats, preferably with a bump, is funny. And the bigger the fall, the bigger the joke. It would be better to throw a custard pie at a bishop than at a curate. . . . The truth is that you cannot be memorably funny without at some point raising topics which the rich, the powerful and the complacent would prefer to see left alone.”¹

George Orwell

INTRODUCTION

Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate the life and times of *Anarchy Comics*, a comic book, yes, but much more than a comic. In its brief time among us, just four issues in nine years, it combined humor and politics in a provocative manner rarely seen before or since. Its special virtue was that it transcended any one category: underground comix, punk zine, or anarchist propaganda.

This anthology tells its story and collects all four issues—some long out of print—along with related sketches, story ideas, roughs, and other visual artifacts previously hidden away in sketchbooks and files. Allow me to set the stage . . .

The late '70s in San Francisco was a time of competing cultural impulses. The mythic Summer of Love was long gone, and San Francisco's reputation as a Hip Mecca had morphed into its newer identity as a Gay Mecca. The local underground comix movement that had garnered national attention in the late '60s and early '70s (with best-selling, independently produced titles such as *Zap Comix*, *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, and *Young Lust*) had peaked by 1975, yet the main S.F. underground comix publishers, Last Gasp and Rip Off Press, continued to operate, and a generous handful of cartoonists still lived around town, looking for work wherever it could be found.²

1 Quoted in the *Big Red Joke Book* (London: Pluto Press, 1968).

2 See my essay on the underground comix scene in S.F. in *Ten Years That Rocked the City* edited by Chris Carlsson (San Francisco: City Lights, 2011). For the best overview of the underground comix movement as a whole, I recommend *Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution, 1963–1975* by Patrick Rosenkranz (Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2002).

On the political front, what remained of the New Left seemed consumed with efforts to either build a classic Marxist-Leninist vanguard party or to launch a democratic-socialist left flank within the Democratic Party. The “armed struggle” tendency, most famously exemplified by the Weather Underground in the United States and the Red Army Faction and Red Brigades in Europe, seemed largely played out by 1977.

Musically, the famous San Francisco rock bands had either crashed and burned or had transformed themselves into corporate arena-rock behemoths such as Jefferson Starship or Journey. Disco and divine decadence dominated the club scene in the pre-AIDS era of hedonistic excess.

Into this atmosphere of stale beer and spent poppers, punk rock exploded like a cultural grenade, giving voice to all the pent-up frustrations of lost dreams and fleeting youth.

I can’t claim that I was at the very forefront of the rising San Francisco punk scene. I was preoccupied with a local anarchist study group, which had its share of old-timers who were not about to leap into a mosh pit, even if they had known what one was. I was also a long-distance editorial cartoonist for *In These Times*, an independent socialist weekly tabloid out of Chicago. But punkish rebellion was in the air, and before long my friends and I were enjoying shows by the Mutants, the Avengers, Crime, No Sisters, the Dead Kennedys, the Ramones, and many more.

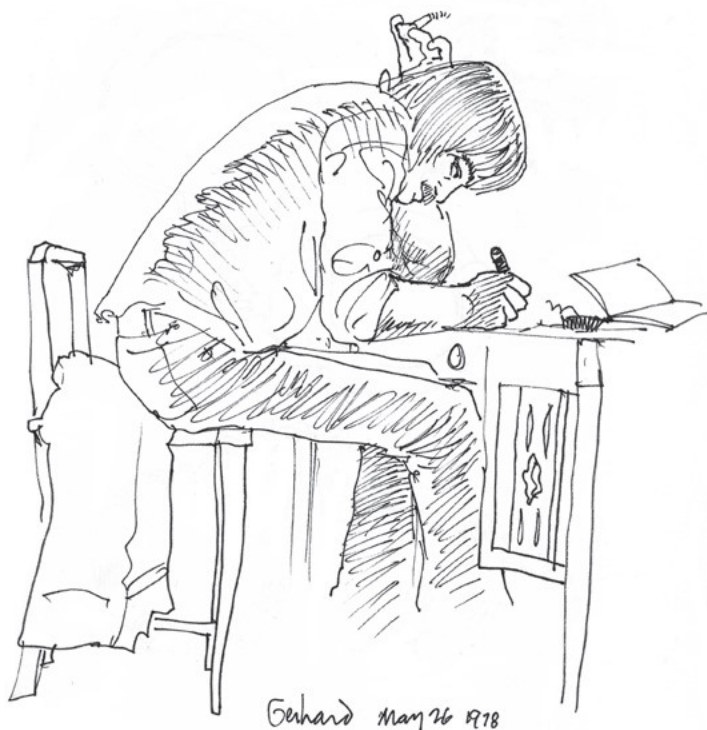
Meanwhile, the idea was taking shape to do an underground comic incorporating both lefty-anarcho politics and punk energy. I’d participated in the first wave of underground comix originating in the late ’60s, and I was still hoping to find a way to help the genre survive into a new era.³ As the ’70s progressed, I’d become active in certain anarchist and libertarian socialist circles in the Bay Area, providing graphics and illustrations for publications, flyers, leaflets, and T-shirts.⁴

About the time that Rip Off Press published Paul Mavrides’s and my satirical political comic book *Cover-up Lowdown* in the fall of 1977, I began correspondence with British anarchist artist Clifford Harper, who’d already produced the one and only issue of *Class War Comics*. Clifford was a creator of elegant high-impact art, very active in the British anarchist scene, and I’d been knocked out by his graphic style when I came across a copy of *Class War* #1.

3 My history with underground comix began with my strip, “New Left Comics,” in *Bijou Funnies* #1 in 1968; continued with the romance comic parody, *Young Lust*, which I cofounded with Bill Griffith in 1970, and *Occult Laff-Parade*, which I edited in 1973; and led to work in a variety of other comix publications over the course of the ’70s such as *Arcade*, *Corporate Crime*, and *Cover-up Lowdown* (with Paul Mavrides).

4 These included posters for the S.F. Committee to Stop Senate Bill 1, graphic design for the *Bay Area Collective Directory*, cover art for the *Red-Eye* journal (which saw only one issue), flyers and T-shirts for the Union of Concerned Commies (a tongue-in-cheek, Situationist-influenced, loose grouping of mostly East Bay libertarian leftists), cartoon illustrations for the *It’s About Times* newspaper (publication of the antinuclear Abalone Alliance), and art for other one-shot projects of brief duration.

Gerhard Seyfried at
work on a drawing.
Sketch by Jay
Kinney.



Around this same time, German anarchist cartoonist Gerhard Seyfried showed up on the doorstep of Rip Off Press in San Francisco, where I was then working. He decided to stay in the Bay Area for a few months, and I soon pictured a new title, *Anarchy Comics*, which would publish the work of an international crew of quasi-anarchist artists.

I didn't conceive *Anarchy Comics* to be a strictly doctrinaire exercise in propaganda, any more than I imagined the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy in the UK" was a carefully composed political analysis disguised as a song. Rather, I wanted to provide an opening to a wide-ranging set of left-libertarian ideas through both satirical and historical pieces. All of our ten contributors in the first issue were in broad agreement and sympathy with each other, but if we were to put ourselves to some test of doctrinal purity, the whole project would have unraveled.⁵

I worked up a proposal for the comic, which I presented to Ron Turner at Last Gasp. Turner had previously published the eco-apocalyptic *Slow Death Comics*, and Last Gasp had more of a political edge than Rip Off Press. Turner reacted positively and we worked out a simple contract and a schedule. With Turner on board, I started to pull the first issue together in earnest. This entailed much correspondence with

⁵ As I described it in an April 8, 1980, letter to Dutch cartoonist Albo Helm, "I see *Anarchy Comics* as a non-dogmatic meeting-place where art can be published which feeds into and supports a general libertarian-socialist-anarchist movement. I don't see this movement as one following only one doctrine. The Situationists, CNT, councilists, Yippies, traditional anarchists, all have valuable things about them. If I were to restrict the comic to only one path, it would soon become a very specialized and narrow thing."



Jay Kinney, Yves Frémion (Épistolier), and François Dupuy (Volny) in Paris, 1980. Photo by Dixie Tracy-Kinney.

foreign artists, deadline nudging with local contributors, and the translation and re-lettering of a historical strip about Kronstadt by the French team of Épistolier (Yves Frémion) and Volny (François Dupuy), which had originally appeared in the French comics magazine *L'Echo des Savanes*.

I'd been soaking up the works of the Situationists, a brilliant bunch of French ultraleftists from the '60s who sometimes grabbed mainstream comic book stories

and rewrote the narrative and balloons to suit their own ironically subversive purposes. I took this approach one step further, by constructing a five-page story out of advertising clip art and old '40s and '50s magazine ads.

The result, titled "Too Real," also had a dollop of punk collage graphics. Perhaps the most notable unintended consequence of the strip was its influence on local fledgling cartoonist Tom Tomorrow, whose initial "This Modern World" ran in *Processed World* in 1986 as a virtual homage to "Too Real."⁶

While he was still in the Bay Area, I talked Gerd Seyfried into doing a back cover for the premiere issue of *Anarchy*. He came up with an "exclusive on-the-spot sketch of mass anarchist demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Peking."⁷ This set the stage for *Anarchy's* policy of satirizing the left as well as capitalism and the right.

Spain Rodriguez, perhaps the most politically-committed leftist among local underground cartoonists, had drawn a two-page strip about Russian anarchist Nestor Makhno the previous year for *TRA (Toward Revolutionary Art)*, a small-circulation journal that attempted to juggle serious politics and serious art—no easy task. That story dovetailed with our theme and deserved a wider circulation, plus it was already done and would fill up two pages. Épistolier and Volny's Kronstadt story was also previously published and, once prepared for English-language publication, would fill another four.

Good friend and sometime collaborator Paul Mavrides signed on for a four-page slot and produced a marvelous goulash of political satire simultaneously invoking and poking fun at anarchism. Melinda Gebbie, another cartoonist friend who was sympathetic to anarchism, created

6 Tomorrow, to his credit, has continued his biting cartoon social commentary up to the present, while I largely abandoned cartooning as the '80s wore on. His 1986 strip was reprinted in *Bad Attitude: The Processed World Anthology* (London: Verso, 1990).

7 This was over a decade before the actual pro-democracy mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square in 1989 that resulted in the infamous Tiananmen Square Massacre.

an anarcho-feminist yarn, “The Quilting Bee,” which was a richly detailed and furious meditation on women trying to bust out of the status quo.

Spain also agreed to produce seven new pages, “Blood and Sky,” about aviators in the Spanish Civil War, which gave him a chance to draw aerial dogfights to his heart’s content. Clifford Harper contributed a two-pager, “Owd Nancy’s Petticoats,” about an early manifestation of anarchism and the origin of the anarchist black flag from black undergarments.

The two odd-duck pages in the issue came from artists I had solicited, but whose relationship to anarchism was attenuated at best. I’d sought a one-pager from Gilbert Shelton—whose most famous creation, “The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers,” was consistently hilarious—because I thought he might come up with a unique angle for a political strip.⁸ I was disappointed when he turned in an installment of his occasional series of “Advanced International Motoring Tips” which envisioned an alternate highway system of “free routes” where no laws applied to risk-taking motorists. It was vaguely in the ballpark, but only vaguely.

I’d also asked a young local cartoonist, John Burnham, for a one-pager, largely because I felt he was a gifted artist who deserved to see print. Alas, his three-panel strip “What’s the Difference?” was too telegraphed from panel to panel and bordered on the incoherent. I felt obliged to run it, but I suspected that our readers would be as mystified by it as I was.

Rounding out the issue, I’d persuaded Turner to let me use the inside back cover as a combination house ad and contact listing for other anarchist and libertarian-left publications. Many of these were small-circulation journals not easily found outside of left bookstores in major cities. Plugging them in a comic book seemed a novel way to get the word out. This custom continued for the first three issues.

Anarchy #1 had a printers’ deadline of August–September 1978—which we somehow miraculously met—and this enabled me to tote along fresh copies of *Anarchy* #1 hot off the press as Dixie and I headed out in mid-September for a six-week honeymoon in Europe. That epic trip—during which we crashed with comix publishers, distributors, and



Jay Kinney visits Vladimir Lenin at Madame Tussaud’s in Amsterdam, 1978. Photo by Dixie Tracy-Kinney.

⁸ Gilbert Shelton had guest-edited *Radical America Komiks*, a special comix issue of *Radical America* published as a comic book by Paul Buhle in 1969. This represented a pioneering bridge between the fledgling underground comix movement and the New Left. However the implosion of SDS in mid-1969 largely consigned the New Left to oblivion and most subsequent underground comix were produced in a context unrelated to the New Left.

cartoonists in France, Holland, Germany, and England—helped cinch closer relations with present and future contributors to *Anarchy*. It also nearly did in our marriage before it got off the ground.

Oblivious to the time-honored maxim that fish and guests both stink after three days, we stayed eleven nights in a Paris suburb with a couple associated with Artefact, a small French comix publisher who had been publishing French translations of the *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* and new work by up and coming French cartoonists.

In Paris, we met up with Yves Frémion (Épistolier) and I had the pleasure of personally handing him a brand new copy of *Anarchy* #1. Much to Dixie's dismay, we also made the rounds of French comic publishers' offices, as I tried to bolster my career as a cartoonist and persuade them to reprint my comics in French. (As Dixie later put it, she thought we were going on a honeymoon and it turned out to be a business trip.)⁹

A week in damp and chilly Amsterdam followed, first at the flat of a Vietnamese porn-king (complete with sauna), and then at the canal-side home of American émigré Bill Daley, whose Daley News company distributed underground comix in Holland.¹⁰

We next moved on to a mere six days crashing with Gerhard Seyfried in his West Berlin squat in the Kreuzberg district, immediately across the street from the much-graffitied Berlin Wall. This stay was highlighted by an evening drive around Berlin in a durable old Mercedes with a pair of anarchists who triggered our adrenaline by unexpectedly rolling down the car windows to sling-shot marbles at downtown bank windows.

But the capper was our twelve excruciating nights sleeping on burlap sacks on the hardwood floor of the London apartment of Alan, a long-suffering friend of a friend. Several decades later, I wonder whether the burlap sacks were a none-too-subtle invitation to get the hell out after a night or two. If so, we were totally clueless. *Mea culpa*.

During this stay, I was able to visit with Clifford Harper and various British countercultural publishers and distributors, and enjoy Charing Cross Road in the era when it was still lined with bookshops. Dixie and I enjoyed London immensely, but oh those nights on the floor!

9 My main success in this effort at trans-Atlantic cartoon crossover was with my "Red Guard Romance," a five-pager that had originally seen print in *Young Lust Comics* #5, published by Last Gasp in 1975. A satire of both romance comic books and the Chinese Cultural Revolution as portrayed in Chinese comic books of the era, the story was provocative if nothing else. After successfully selling the strip for reprint to the French comic magazine *L'Echo des Savanes*, I was clued in by a French colleague that the strip was welcomed because the magazine's editor was a member of the Soviet-aligned French Communist Party, and my strip, published in France at that time, would serve as a droll needling of China and the Maoists. Needless to say, I'd been oblivious to such nuances of French left politics and the very notion of an editor of a major comic magazine being a communist was mind-boggling.

10 How, you might ask, did we end up in the flat of a Vietnamese porn-king? Long story short, he was a distribution colleague of Bill Daley. He had a sweet daughter who was very hospitable to us, and the alleged porn-king himself was absent from the scene. Did we stay for a couple of nights in a Southeast Asian porno safe house? I honestly have no idea.

Within a month of our return to San Francisco came the mass suicide at Jonestown and the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and gay supervisor Harvey Milk at S.F. City Hall. Things appeared to be rattling apart, making it seem like *Anarchy Comics* was an even more appropriate expression of the zeitgeist than I'd originally imagined.

Anarchy #1 debuted with a print run of fifteen thousand, and it soon became apparent that the comic was a hit. It even made its way into prisons: we received fan letters from political prisoners Janine Bertram (of the George Jackson Brigade) and Carl Harp (of the anarchist Black Dragon Collective in Washington's Walla Walla penitentiary). Various anarchist activists from around the United States and Europe got in touch and enabled us to expand distribution beyond the usual comix outlets through political networks and other channels such as punk record shops. As I saw it at the time, underground comix in the traditional sense were a fading phenomenon of the recent past, but *Anarchy Comics* #1 held out hopes for a post-counter-cultural comix future.



Melinda Gebbie in her studio. Sketch by Jay Kinney.

ANARCHY #2

No sooner had our first issue come out than I started work on pulling together *Anarchy* #2. Only one of the cartoonists in #1 had been a woman—Melinda Gebbie—and I hoped to increase that number with this next issue. For #2, Sharon Rudahl came on board with a one-pager, Melinda returned with three pages of ornately illustrated quotes from Emma Goldman, and local punk photographer Ruby Ray provided a striking hand-tinted photo for the front cover.¹¹

Clifford Harper returned with an expressionist-inspired rendering of a Bertolt Brecht ballad, while Spain provided a dramatic saga of the Spanish Civil War and Buenaventura Durruti. We ran another in Épistolier's series "Liberty Through the Ages," this one an account of the Yippies tossing dollar bills onto the floor of the stock exchange,

¹¹ For what it's worth, I believe this was the only photo to ever grace the cover of an underground comic.



Flyer by Jay Kinney for Anarchy Show at a local San Francisco punk art gallery, 1979.

ably illustrated with panache by Michel Trublin. This was translated by a close comrade, Adam Cornford (a.k.a. "Louis Michaelson"), who also provided considerable moral support for the comic.

Steve Stiles, who had been doing some funny strips for comix published by Denis Kitchen, provided a striking history of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) intertwined with a personal account of his run-in with military intelligence over his socializing with Wobblies in New York. I'd also persuaded Dutch cartoonist Peter Pontiac to contribute, though the two-pager I pried out of him turned out to be a paean to nihilism, produced under deadline pressure while he was drunk on vodka and stoned on smack.

The longest story in the issue was my eight-page collaboration with Paul Mavrides, "Kultur Dokuments," drawn in a diagrammatic pictogram style interspersed with a three-page punk spoof of Archie comics featuring Anarchie, Ludehead, Blondie, and Moronica. Paul also painted an unforgettable velvet painting of Chairman Mao with big ol' Walter Keane eyes for the back cover, which Last Gasp published as a full-size color poster. Gerhard Seyfried's only presence in the issue was a spot cartoon on the inside front cover.

Issue #2 was published in late 1979 and I had high hopes of producing a new issue at least annually. However, I also decided we needed to expand the page-count from the previous thirty-two to a fatter forty-eight pages. My contacts with anarcho-sympathetic artists were growing and I needed more room to fit everyone in. *Anarchy* #3 featured nineteen contributors (in comparison to ten contributors in #1 and twelve in #2), slowing the production process considerably.

While *Anarchy* #3 was coming together during 1980, *Anarchy* #1 went into a second printing, providing further royalties to the artists. Alas, the cover price on the second printing was raised from \$1 to \$1.25 (partly due to rampant inflation at the time) and, in putting the new price in place on the cover, the printers goofed and changed the issue number from #1 to #2. This provided years of confusion with two *Anarchy* #2's out there, one of which was really *Anarchy* #1.¹²

¹² In contrast to conventional newsstand comic books, which would typically have a shelf life of a month or less, underground comix were kept in print for years and went into further printings if there was sufficient sustained demand.

In 1980, Paul Buhle, partly inspired by *Anarchy Comics*, also came up with the idea for a Humor International. Paul had been the founding editor of the SDS magazine *Radical America* in the '60s and an early supporter of underground comix. We'd been in touch throughout the '70s as he became a noted labor historian and the founder of *Cultural Correspondence*, a new magazine defending the radical potential of popular culture.

Paul took my vision of *Anarchy Comics* as an international project of radical cartoonists and extrapolated from it the possibility of a Humor International transcending any single publication (let alone any single left sectarian stream). He wrote up a manifesto and invited my input. I had my hands full just editing *Anarchy Comics*, so my suggestions were few, but I was persuaded to come on board as cosigner of the manifesto. I also sent out copies of the manifesto to the *Anarchy* cartoonists, inviting them to add their names to the initiative. I didn't see this as leading much of anywhere, but I figured it couldn't hurt.

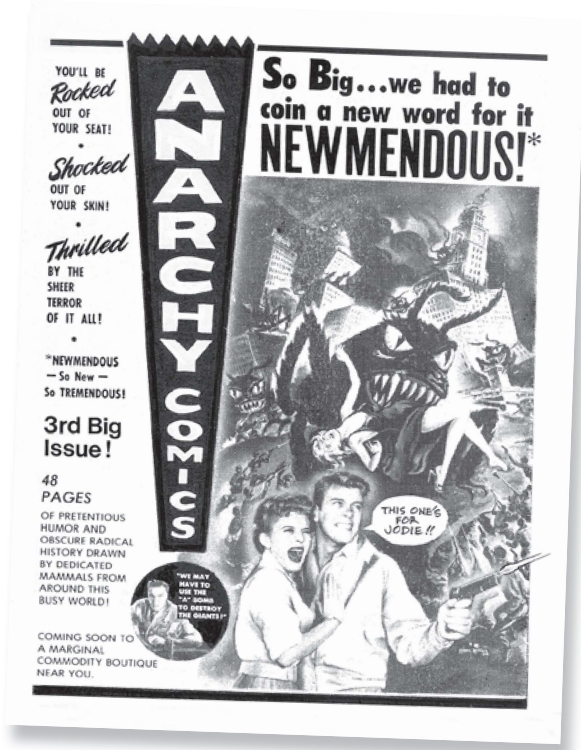
ANARCHY #3

For *Anarchy*'s third issue, perhaps hoping against hope, I asked Dutch cartoonist Peter Pontiac for a front cover. Peter was a gifted artist, and I hoped that he could muster the energy for a striking cover image despite his drug issues. He did come through with a powerful black-and-white drawing of a Dutch anarcho-punk tossing a brick at a surveillance camera along a rundown Dutch urban street scene. I drafted Guy Colwell, artist extraordinaire and creator of the seminal *Inner City Romance* comics, to do the coloring for Pontiac's art, and the results were spectacular.

Ad for *Anarchy* #3
by Paul Mavrides
and Jay Kinney.

After *Anarchy* #2, three anarchist cartoonists contacted me with hopes of contributing to the project. Donald Rooum, a British artist, had been drawing "Wildcat," a regular comic strip in *Freedom*, the respected and long-running British anarchist fortnightly. Rooum should have been part of our project from the start, but I'd somehow missed contacting him. He readily agreed to contribute a one-pager for #3.

Albo Helm was a Dutch cartoonist who had published an anarchistic comic book, *Schmerz Comix*, in 1978, which I knew nothing about. When he sent along a copy, we began an intensive correspondence that resulted in our reprinting of a choice two-pager from *Schmerz* in *Anarchy* #3.



Dave Lester, a Canadian artist who had been producing anarcho-feminist satirical strips for Canadian radical publications, sent along a batch of strips, three of which were featured in *Anarchy* #3.

Also on the international front, I met Spanish cartoonist Pepe Moreno when he moved to the Bay Area. He was sympathetic to the *Anarchy Comics* project and contributed a back cover mock ad characterizing both sides of the Cold War as giant mosquitos sucking the planet dry.

Other new voices in the third issue included Gary Panter, creator of “Jimbo,” a regular strip in the L.A. punk tabloid *Slash*, whose work I admired. He contributed a two-page mash-up that was the most stylish and mystifying strip in the issue.

I also solicited a four-pager from Greg Irons, one of the underground comix greats who had served his time as staff artist for the ultimate gonzo underground paper, *The Berkeley Tribe*, in the early ’70s. Greg was now primarily a tattoo artist, but he produced a powerful strip illustrating urban alienation and paranoia. The connection to anarchism was debatable, but there was no debating the mastery of the art. Tragically, Greg died prematurely three years later, hit by a bus amid heavy street traffic in Bangkok.

Matt Feazell, a young southern artist, contacted me and I took a chance on offering him a four-page slot. He came through with the droll “Pest Control,” a political metaphor casting insects as insurgents.

Steve Lafler, an Oregon artist with a wacky sense of humor, was eager to contribute, and he turned in a one-page “Naked Avenger,” which managed to simultaneously satirize superheroes, liberal anticorporatism, and the ruling class.

The final new voice was Marian (now brooke) Lydbrooke, a Canadian artist in the anarcho-feminist milieu, who sent along some strips to reprint, from which I chose two.

But the majority of the issue consisted of work from what were now our dependable regulars. Épistolier and Trublin provided another historical saga, a tale of the peasant revolt of the Rustauds in the Alsace. Clifford Harper let us reprint his powerful strip, “What Is Government?” a grim rendering of an extended quote from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Gerd Seyfried provided a two-page lampoon of an incompetent policeman blaming his ham-handedness on anarchists. Melinda Gebbie, working with Adam Cornford, created three pages about the surrealist revolutionary Benjamin Peret. Sharon Rudahl turned in a four-page story about class warfare in Mexico, her finest work for *Anarchy*.

Adam Cornford and I had been brainstorming a story about the Autonomists in Italy, a free leftist formation that sidestepped the conventional left with direct action. Spain agreed to illustrate our script, resulting in the six-page “Roman Spring.”

The longest story in the issue was “No Exit” by Paul Mavrides and me, a jaundiced take on both punk culture and utopian anarchism,

T-shirt design by
Jay Kinney for
Union of Concerned
Comms,
circa 1978.



starring Jean-Paul Sartre Jr., an Orange County punk rocker who is torn limb from limb at a punk show, cryogenically frozen, and revived in a future anarchist utopia. Could the emotional quasi-anarchism of punks actually handle a realized anarchist society? We doubted it, and this time-traveling exercise in existential satire was the result.

By now, back in the real world, Ronald Reagan had been elected president of the United States and it was beginning to look to me like anarchists and punks were akin to dogs barking at the moon.

Alas, *Anarchy Comics* #3 was largely my swan song for the project. I'd undergone a major shift in outlook at the start of 1981, in part due to a mind-blowing bite of a cannabis cookie given to me as a Christmas present, and a subsequent unexpected mystical experience (not cookie-related) that left me feeling out-of-sync with the largely atheist anarchist subculture. I also got fed up with the antics of some "more revolutionary than thou" loose cannons in the local anarchist scene—a rant I'll save for some other occasion. My change of perspective proceeded gradually, culminating in a retreat from politics and a growth in spiritual interests.¹³

However back in 1981, I loyally finished editing *Anarchy* #3 and was pleased with the result. Unfortunately, I had largely lost faith in the prospects for the anarchistic social revolution that I had touted in *Anarchy* #1. On a more practical note, I had also concluded, after some ten years

13 As late as 1988, I was still engaged in an effort to reconcile anarchism with spirituality, most notably in an exhaustive debate with Fred Woodworth and Lev Chernyi in the pages of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* 15 (Winter 1988) and 16 (Summer 1988).

of trying to make it work, that editing and drawing underground comix was a terrible way to pay the rent. Considering the amount of time and energy it took to pull together an issue of *Anarchy Comics*, I was courting financial suicide.

With uncanny timing, it was at this juncture that the “Manifesto of the Humor International” finally saw print in the Summer 1981 issue of *Cultural Correspondence* with sixty-eight signers, some of them actual cartoonists and humorists from around the world, others either Bay Area left-libertarian comrades of mine or Chicago Surrealists and their international contacts.¹⁴

An artistic call to arms was the last thing on my mind at that point, as I was deeply depressed while trying to figure out exactly what I *did* believe, politically, spiritually, and creatively. Matters went from the sublime to the ridiculous (for me at least), when Buhle organized a weekend Radical Humor Festival for April 1982 at New York University.

Were I so inclined, this was the perfect opportunity for me to take the stage and garner my props as a radical humorist. Instead, I could barely drag myself to New York for the weekend event, much less participate enthusiastically. I wasn’t feeling radical, humorous, or festive. I skipped most of the festival’s program and instead hung out with *Anarchy Comics* contributor Matt Feazell, who’d journeyed to the Festival on his own initiative from Raleigh, North Carolina.¹⁵

ANARCHY #4

There was still a demand for further issues of *Anarchy Comics* and I didn’t wish to stand in the way of the comic continuing, so I bowed out as editor and turned over the title to Paul Mavrides, my collaborator on many underground strips and associate editor of *Anarchy* #3. I remained as associate editor and advisor for *Anarchy* #4, the title’s final issue that took until 1987 to finally manifest. By this time, the concept of the comic as an international political project had gotten lost in the shuffle, and Clifford Harper was the only non-American artist in #4. Spain Rodriguez’s powerful account of the Paris Commune, titled “1871,” was the most historically directed story, with the rest of us mostly riffing on contemporary political and social issues.

Clifford Harper contributed a four-page strip about a teenage anarchist who firebombed a local police station in a London suburb in 1982 and ended up hanging himself in jail when apprehended. Melinda Gebbie, now living in England, turned in a three-page strip about her run-in with the British authorities over her allegedly “obscene” comix

¹⁴ Surrealist movement stalwarts Franklin and Penny Rosemont were, by happenstance, the guest editors and designers of the Summer 1981 *Cultural Correspondence* (officially the final issue of the magazine), so the whole Humor International initiative had taken on the air of a romantic revolutionary gesture in the tradition of the Surrealist International.

¹⁵ Critical reflections upon the Radical Humor Festival and transcripts and documents from it can be found in *Cultural Correspondence* new series #2 (Winter 1983), edited by Jim Murray.

My instincts are libertarian
 My sympathies are anarchist
 My logic is socialist
 My conditioning is liberal
 and my sense of humor is reactionary. Haha ha!



work. Bay Area cartoonist “Norman Dog” provided a four-page strip, “You Rule the World!” and let us reprint a two-pager, “Mr. Helpful,” both of which provided very welcome chuckles, but not much political depth.

The Kinney
 Philosophy,
 circa 1980.

R. Diggs (pen name for long-time San Francisco underground cartoonist Harry Driggs) produced a two-pager, “Corporate-Rex,” which portrayed hulking corporate entities such as Exxon and AT&T as doomed dinosaurs, while Hal Robins came up with a wry two-pager, “Anarchy=Panarchy,” which wrestled with the vexing challenge of trying to define anarchy. Byron Werner, a cohort in the Church of the SubGenius—a satirical anticult masquerading as a cult with which Paul, Hal, and I were involved—contributed a one-page strip riffing on an alien invasion of earth.

Once again, the longest strip was allotted to Paul Mavrides and me, in this case a ten-page collaborative saga, “Armageddon Outtahere!” This neo-Gnostic riff on end-of-the-world myths featured a returned Jesus as a bank-robber and Mary Magdalene as his moll.

This turned out to be *Anarchy*’s final issue. My attention had shifted to other projects such as editing the Whole Earth magazine, *CoEvolution Quarterly*, during 1983–84, and then publishing the quarterly *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions*, from 1985 to 1999. Paul was occupied with working with Gilbert Shelton on Freak Brothers strips. With no new editor in the wings, *Anarchy Comics* came to an end after four issues.

During this period, I left cartooning behind and concentrated on editing and publishing material that was only occasionally political. What political writing I did generate was, more often than not, concerned with finding some new political space beyond the old “left vs.

right” dichotomy.¹⁶ Doctrinaire anarchism increasingly struck me as a noble dream, unlikely to ever be realized except in small-scale temporary projects.

I didn’t disown my previous enthusiasm for the dream, but I came to regard the building of an anarchist society as a lost cause doomed in part by too much revolutionary posturing by its proponents. A nonauthoritarian, postcorporate, more democratic future still remains a worthy goal. Just how we might get there, however, is a wide-open question.

Meanwhile, enjoy the four issues of *Anarchy Comics* that we produced back in the day and the never-before-published material spicing up the mix. If this book inspires you to take up the torch and try to create a better society (or just a better comic book), all the more power to you. The future remains unwritten.

Jay Kinney



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¹⁶ See *Whole Earth* #101 (Summer 2000) for my guest-edited section on “Beyond Left & Right.”