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Review

Daniel Poyner (ed.), *Autonomy: The Cover Designs of Anarchy, 1961-1970*. London: Hyphen Press, 2012. 302 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9072-5946-6, € 27,99.

Throughout the 1960s the British designer Rufus Segar created a range of visually enticing covers for *Anarchy*, the monthly magazine founded by Colin Ward. Each month *Anarchy* considered a variety of topics through the looking glass of the movement it was named after. Its articles often touched upon controversial subjects and thus, as Daniel Poyner notes in the introduction to this handsome book, Segar's cover designs were a form of 'sugar coating on the beneficial pill'. Ward had first come into contact with anarchism during the war years via the weekly newspaper *War Commentary*, which he subscribed and later also contributed to. While anarchism had burgeoned in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and during the Second World War, the movement dwindled in the late 1950s, becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from a profusion of new countercultural ways of thinking. By 1961, however, as a new youth culture took shape, Ward decided that ample cultural space existed for a new anarchist magazine in Britain, op-

ting for a monthly, as it would allow for a more well-considered response to current events. The first issue of *Anarchy* arrived in March 1961, and paid attention to such various subjects as sex and violence in novels, the state of education, the rise of the Angry Young Men movement and the work of economist John Kenneth Galbraith. With the next issue Rufus Segar began designing for *Anarchy*, his debut a playful collage of a drill press and a top hat, which visualized the subject of worker's control. Segar would end up doing more than a hundred of the magazine's covers.

As Poyner asserts in the book's short but lucid introduction, Segar's cover designs employed a 'wide range of styles and techniques [which] gave the covers an energy and a look that fit the informality and flexibility of anarchism.' Early covers were somewhat limited in their design by the yellow paper stock they were printed on, but Segar's adventurous use of typography, collage, line drawings and photography worked effectively within the constrictions of the medium and the limited funds available. For Segar the magazine cover – the front and back of which he emphatically saw as an inseparable whole – each month presented him with an 'empty room', a

space between four corners that needed to be filled. Segar's own remarks, reproduced here in an interview with Poyner from 2009, are revealing of his practical approach to design, which may have stemmed from the commercial work he did at the time for publications like *The Economist*. Not only did Segar work extremely fast, Ward, who would not see his designs until the magazine was in proof, also gave him a virtual *carte blanche*. Only once would Segar and Ward clash over a cover design, a point I will return to briefly below.

Autonomy – the book is named after Ward's original title for the magazine, which was vetoed by his fellow editors – is mostly an ode to Rufus Segar. Not only were the lion's share of the one hundred and eighteen covers reproduced here designed by Segar, the accompanying texts by Raphael Samuel and Richard Hollis also focus strongly on him. Anyone interested in other aspects of the magazine, in particular its contents, is better off reading Ward's 1987 collection of texts from the magazine *A Decade of Anarchy*, or resorting to the many digitized issues now available on Archive.org. Still, having all of *Anarchy*'s covers collected in a single publication is a blessing: all too often are designers for magazines relegated to the sidelines of scholarship, eclipsed by publishers and authors. While *Anarchy* may have been Colin Ward's 'one-man-band operation', as Segar calls it, this typology ignores his own role in the magazine's success. Accordingly, while Poyner's book on the one hand fosters a hunger for a more extensive study of *Anarchy*, on the other hand, the centrality of design here is laudable.

The first and last time Ward and Segar disagreed over a cover design may have foreshadowed the magazine's later demise in 1970. Ward devoted the November 1969 issue to the Austrian psychoanalyst and scholar of sexuality Wilhelm Reich, a popular figure during the sexual revolution of the late 1960s. Segar's concept cover depicted a nude couple's dialogue: while the man sums up a long list of Reich's works on sexual climax, the woman retorts: 'Orgasm schmorgasm, how about a good lay.' While the jocular tone fit the antidoctrinaire stance the magazine embraced, the issue's main author Robert Ollendorf felt it undercut Reich's message, and Ward replaced it with a simple typeface-based cover. Segar would continue to design covers for a year, but by late 1970 Ward lost interest and *Anarchy* was discontinued.

These days the discussions that played out in a magazine like *Anarchy* have moved to online forums, Twitter and Facebook pages, which makes *Autonomy* a fascinating flashback to a moment when activist political discussion still largely took place on paper. With the ephemeral quality of today's radical discussions in mind, *Autonomy* provides a glimpse into an intriguing part of our paper past – a time when discussions moved in a slower and perhaps more deliberate way – and belongs on the bookshelf of anyone interested in 1960s radicalism.

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