

## Anarchist Apogee, 1916

In the United States, the social anarchist movement reached a historical apogee in the years just before the First World War, measured by newspaper circulation figures, scope of public activities, and intellectual perspicacity. In 1916, anarchists could be found leading strikes of midwestern miners, distributing illegal birth-control information to poor women, teaching avant-garde art techniques to factory workers, and threatening to incinerate the homes of the upper class if they continued to resist demands to share their wealth and decision-making power. The ameliorative reforms championed by settlement house workers and progressive politicians in these years did not go nearly far enough, in their eyes. Accordingly, anarchists seized on a widely felt need for change and attempted to push it in a revolutionary direction. They were so feared, such a presence in the culture, that well-heeled parents turned the most notorious among them, Emma Goldman, into a bogeyman to discipline their children: “Go to bed, or Red Emma is going to get you!”

It would be misleading to speak of anarchists as succeeding in these years, since anarchism was then, as always, a marginal political current. Because they eschewed formal organizations that maintained membership rosters, it is difficult to accurately gauge how many people counted themselves as anarchists at a given moment. However, newspaper circulation records and lecture receipts suggest there were between fifty thousand and a hundred thousand adherents in 1915—a tiny but vociferous and daring portion of the country’s 100 million residents.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is fair to discuss the *relative* success of the movement during the second decade of the twentieth century, owing to the fact that it was growing in numbers, establishing coalitions with new allies, and shaping public discourse more than it ever had before or has since. The gains anarchists made during the Progressive Era are attributable

to a set of favorable social trends and to what the movement made of these conditions.

Anarchism provided participants with a broad worldview that helped them make sense of their daily lives. Despite these shared beliefs, early-twentieth-century anarchists disagreed on matters of strategy and which issues to prioritize. In the years before the First World War, three strategic tendencies—insurrectionary, syndicalist, and bohemian anarchism—distinguished themselves and sometimes clashed with one another. Language and ethnic differences also cleaved the movement in complicated patterns. Mapping the movement in such a way helps explain the various ways anarchists reacted to the crisis surrounding the First World War, as well as the complex trajectories in which their ideas, strategies, and organizational forms evolved over the decades that followed.

### A TIME OF TENSION

Progressive Era anarchists saw themselves as partisans in a war with employers, government officials ensconced in the bosses' pockets, and ministers who sanctified inequality while shaming those seeking a bit of pleasure in their lives and bodies. This war was at times bloody and at other times more muted. It was expressed daily as a struggle of wills over work practices and pay rates that frequently spilled out into lopsided armed conflict: police, Pinkertons, militias, and vigilantes suppressing strikes by force of arms, with an occasional guerilla riposte targeting elite property or persons. Beneath the violence lay an incessant battle of words and images. While the mainstream press mastered the art of depicting anarchists as animalistic and mentally unsound, anarchists contributed greatly to the enduring image of the monopoly capitalist as a hog in coattails, belly so large as to render his legs virtually useless. Demographics help explain the extent of this enmity.

Since its inception in the 1880s, the U.S. anarchist movement had been primarily composed of European immigrants. In the early twentieth century, anarchists remained more likely to speak and write Yiddish, Italian, Russian, or Spanish, rather than English, as a primary language. These radicals constituted a subset of the approximately 20 million people—mostly from southern and eastern Europe but also from Asia and Mexico—who had migrated to the United States since 1880.<sup>2</sup> Nudged out of their home countries by religious violence and conflicts rooted in the growth pangs of bourgeois soci-

ety, many were drawn to North America by recruiters who sought low-wage laborers to build the cities and staff the factories that had sprung up after the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, the gross domestic product of the United States had outstripped those of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom *combined*, but this newfound wealth was in no way evenly distributed.<sup>4</sup> A new class fraction of industrial and banking elites joined the older merchant and planter families that had long dominated national politics. Although many immigrants were shifting from near-feudal conditions to urban industrial settings, class disparities remained glaring. As a teenager, Lucy Robins Lang was easily converted to anarchism by coworkers in a garment factory after she migrated with her family from a Russian shtetl to a grim basement in a Chicago ghetto.<sup>5</sup>

The upper class was, in reality, buffered socially by professionals and a growing stratum of English-speakers delegated clerical and managerial responsibilities as companies shifted manual tasks to foreign-born newcomers.<sup>6</sup> However, such distinctions could easily slip from view in what was often experienced as a Manichean world of employers and employees. Immigrants with skills in mining and logging went to work in rudimentary camps where the superintendent's home was set off from the workers' shacks like officers' quarters from army barracks. Laborers died routinely in preventable industrial accidents that plagued mines and factories alike. While the spread of tenements, child labor, and smoke-blackened skies convinced many in the middle class of the need for new regulations and forms of assistance, others sought more transformative solutions. At least one survivor of the notorious 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory fire, Mary Abrams, became a revolutionary anarchist.<sup>7</sup> For Abrams and others like her, the possibility of improving one's life by voting seemed laughable.

Many immigrant shop hands came from countries in which working people had not yet gained the vote. In the United States, they encountered a baffling array of suffrage laws. Owning property was not required in order to cast a ballot, but men had to first become citizens. Chinese immigrants were barred from citizenship on racial grounds and, therefore, prevented from voting. Native Americans, overwhelmingly confined to isolated reservations, would not gain full citizenship rights until 1924. Black men were supposedly entitled to vote, but were largely prevented from doing so in the southern states, where nine out of ten of them lived. Women not otherwise disqualified could vote only in certain elections in a few western states.<sup>8</sup> This miasma of disqualifications created a situation in which the majority of the people

living in the United States were ineligible to vote for representatives, much less seek office themselves. Nevertheless, the disenfranchised were inventing new ways of exercising power.

W. E. B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells, and their allies launched the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 with the aim of leveraging educational programs and litigation to win respect, voting rights, and access to jobs for African Americans. Meanwhile, independent black-owned newspapers, such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*, encouraged African Americans to move north, where they could organize more openly.<sup>9</sup> Campaigns to expand the rights of women were simultaneously on the rise, with Margaret Sanger opening the country's first birth-control clinic in 1916 and suffragists building the organizational clout needed to win passage of the Nineteenth Amendment by the end of the decade.<sup>10</sup>

In the same years, wage laborers fought stridently to improve pay and job conditions. Trade union membership nearly quadrupled, to approximately 3 million between 1900 and 1917, and worker militancy increased as employers responded to strikes with violence.<sup>11</sup> The majority joined moderate craft-specific unions grouped under the American Federation of Labor, but after 1905 the anticapitalist Industrial Workers of the World expanded rapidly, aided by anarchists and other radicals.<sup>12</sup> In Lawrence, Massachusetts, upward of twenty thousand textile workers struck in 1912, holding out against freezing temperatures and billy-club-wielding police to win most of their demands. The following year, thousands of silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey, struck for six months despite nearly two thousand arrests. Farther west the response to labor organizing was even more draconian. The Colorado National Guard infamously killed eleven children and nine adults when it set fire to an encampment of striking miners in 1914.<sup>13</sup>

The poor also organized politically. The Socialist Party united midwestern farmers with immigrant factory hands and urbane intellectuals, publishing more than three hundred newspapers and capturing 6 percent of the vote in the presidential election of 1912. Socialists sought to eventually replace capitalism by organizing trade unions and electing party candidates to office.<sup>14</sup> Although anarchists disagreed with strategies focused on winning voting rights, the diverse struggles to downwardly redistribute power, wealth, and dignity that began to coalesce in these years created a climate in which anarchists were able to gain greater traction and to branch out from the constituencies and issues on which they had focused since the early 1880s.

The anticapitalist anarchist movement had arisen in the United States alongside the growth of wage labor and mass migration from Europe. Its first generation consisted of exiled German socialists, such as Johann Most and August Spies, and their acolytes, who began calling for armed insurrection after losing faith in electoral strategies. By 1886, Chicago anarchists had built a militant labor federation of some fifty thousand manual workers, while anarchist newspapers, beer halls, and singing societies proliferated in New York and other cities. *Anarchism* became a household term—of opprobrium—in May of that year, when six anarchist firebrands were convicted of conspiracy after a bomb killed policemen sent to disperse a labor rally in Chicago’s Haymarket district.<sup>15</sup> The movement waxed and waned over the next two decades as sympathizers attracted to the anarchists’ “beautiful ideal” were repeatedly driven away by police crackdowns or their own misgivings about political violence.

The movement’s fortunes began to change in the early twentieth century, as national politics shifted leftward and a new generation of talented anarchist organizers, such as Saul Yanovsky, Carlo Tresca, and Ricardo Flores Magón, came to the fore. By the second decade of the twentieth century, anarchists lived in coastal and midwestern industrial cities, inland mining towns, and the occasional rural commune, such as the Home Colony on the Puget Sound.<sup>16</sup> Most worked for wages in garment or cigar factories, mines or lumber camps, or as unwaged homemakers, attending meetings after putting in ten hours on the job.<sup>17</sup> Those living in cities resided in working-class neighborhoods, usually amid people who shared their primary language and country of origin. Despite anarchists’ notoriety as advocates of “free love,” historian Jennifer Guglielmo notes, “the anarchist movement was centered on families.”<sup>18</sup> Most anarchists lived as monogamous couples raising children together, although many chose not to legally marry, rejecting the idea that either a church or government should regulate their emotional bonds. Families often kept bachelors as boarders, and some anarchists experimented with collective living in apartments or row houses.<sup>19</sup>

Although anarchists rejected loyalty to political states, ties of language and culture influenced the political tasks they prioritized. They balanced the need to organize their own ethnic communities with the desire to collaborate with other nearby anarchists, all the while remaining attentive to developments overseas—sending funds, writing articles, and demonstrating support for comrades abroad.<sup>20</sup>

Rather than joining a unified political party, anarchists belonged to a series of overlapping organizations linked by a broader cultural milieu. When

Morris Greenshner immigrated to New York in 1909, his cousin took him to a meeting of the Workmen's Circle, a self-help organization that paid out sick benefits and doubled as a social club. There he met a friend who encouraged him to join the Anarchist Red Cross, an organization that sent money and letters of support to anarchists imprisoned in Russia. After finding a job, Greenshner joined the anarchist Union of Russian Workers. Movement work often led to romance as well. Greenshner later recalled, "I met my wife Becky in 1910 at a May First Demonstration. Becky and I attended anarchist meetings and lectures." The couple also socialized at fund-raising balls and organized a "literary anarchist group" that sold European periodicals and sent the proceeds back across the Atlantic.<sup>21</sup> The Greenshners's story, and schedule, was typical for anarchist militants of their day.

In this networked political and social milieu, newspapers and journals served as *de facto* political centers—means of grouping anarchists by language and strategic orientation. Publishers of periodicals routinely sponsored lecture series and distributed books and pamphlets by mail. Typically, editors were revered figures who wrote much of the copy and doubled as powerful orators. When conflicts emerged, anarchists lined up according to which newspaper's editorial line they supported. In this way, publishers such as Luigi Galleani, Pedro Esteve, Alexander Berkman, and others became unofficial leaders and spokespeople of the movement.<sup>22</sup> Whether delivered in print, in speeches, or through theatrical productions, anarchist theory explained why the world contained so much misery and confidently assured those who would listen that it was possible for humans to live much freer, more enjoyable lives.

#### FUNDAMENTALS OF THE ANARCHIST WORLDVIEW

Between 1900 and 1916, U.S. anarchists continued to derive the fundamentals of their worldview from writings produced in the second half of the previous century by European anarchist militant-intellectuals such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, and Errico Malatesta.<sup>23</sup> These thinkers launched their inquiry into the world from the perspective of propertyless peasants and wage laborers living under conditions of scarcity during the tumult of the industrial revolution in Europe. Anarchists built on the insights of the radical republican and utopian socialist movements to insist upon broader and deeper application of the

principles of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity (the latter often articulated in the more encompassing term *solidarity*).<sup>24</sup> Anarchists stridently opposed capitalism, political states, and religion because they saw these institutions as inimical to the rights of all people to well-being, free expression, and the full realization of their potential.

Anarchist economic analysis adopted the critique of property relations and the labor theory of value expounded by Karl Marx. From this perspective, a small minority of people monopolized ownership of factories and fertile land, thereby coercing the majority to work for them. Paying wages lower than the total value of the commodities workers produced, the owners became rich off of others' toil. This is what led the first self-identified anarchist, Proudhon, to proclaim, "Property is theft!"<sup>25</sup> Appropriation of surplus value was the original and constantly reiterated injustice that structured life and fueled the rage burning within social anarchists. "Many are the lies that pass for truths," explained the Russian American anarchist Alexander Berkman in 1916. "But the greatest and most pernicious of them all is the cunning insistence on 'harmony between capital and labor.' It is the 'harmony' of inevitable, eternal discord, the symphony of master and slave, the love of the jackal for its prey."<sup>26</sup>

Anarchists recognized deep-seated connections between the power of the owners of productive property, church officials, and government authorities. Religion was odious to them because it preached doctrines of original sin that depicted humans as inherently dangerous to themselves and others, necessitating their submission to supernatural authority. "God being truth, justice, goodness, beauty, power and life," thundered Bakunin, "man is falsehood, iniquity, evil, ugliness, impotence, and death. God being master, man is the slave."<sup>27</sup> The hierarchy of God clergy laymen normalized hierarchical relations in other aspects of life, while religious authorities counseled respect for the existing social order. "The Church with its hoary superstitions is one of the great factors that keep the workers in obedience and submission," maintained Berkman. "Throughout history the priest—of all denominations—has always sided with King and Master. He has kept the eyes of the people riveted upon 'heavenly things' while the exploiters were despoiling them of their earthly possessions."<sup>28</sup>

Anarchists saw not only the church but also the governments of their day as tools wielded by the owning class—likewise, the major political parties, newspapers, and public schools.<sup>29</sup> They argued that parliamentary governments, even those granting universal suffrage, differed little in intention or outcome

from monarchies or other authoritarian systems. Anarchists criticized political states in three main ways. First, they believed all existing states were organized to defend class privilege, which was unjustified and harmful to working people. Second, they argued that imposing laws on people, for purposes of domination or not, constituted a suffocating and unjustifiable violation of human liberty. This tenet led the anarchists to reject, a priori, the legitimacy of any form of potential socialist state as well as the use of electoral strategies to create change. Emma Goldman, for example, criticized the movement for women's suffrage by rhetorically asking, "Is it not the most brutal imposition for one set of people to make laws that another set is coerced by force to obey? Yet woman clamors for that 'golden opportunity' that has wrought so much misery in the world, and robbed man of his integrity and self-reliance."<sup>30</sup> Finally, anarchists argued that, without fail, power corrupted those who held positions of authority. Such corruption inevitably led officials to prioritize the expansion of institutional power and their personal privileges over all other concerns.<sup>31</sup>

Liberals theorists too, of course, warned of the defects of parliamentary systems and acknowledged that sovereign states impede the absolute liberty of citizens, leading some to declare government a "necessary evil." The classical anarchist theorists differed from liberals precisely in their belief that government was not only unjust but also *unnecessary*.<sup>32</sup> Social anarchists based this faith on their view of human nature and their interpretation of recent social trends. Pushing back against social Darwinist ideas that saw life as an unrelenting battle between classes and races, Kropotkin sought to prove that "mutual aid" among members of the same species was as important as competition in the struggle to survive in nature—and thus concern for others was equally a part of the human condition.<sup>33</sup>

Drawing on Enlightenment thought and on the nineteenth century's scientific optimism, anarchists insisted that humans were perfecting their use of reason and thereby discovering "laws of nature" that ordered the physical environment. Similarly, natural laws could harmoniously order human society if they were widely known. Anarchists believed that people would increasingly come to practice "moral self-government" in accordance with these laws, removing the need for external authority.<sup>34</sup> To detractors who saw this as dangerously naive, the anarchists argued that social context significantly shaped human behavior. The inequitable social order in which they currently lived exacerbated humans' antisocial tendencies, but an egalitarian society would reduce such impulses to a minimum. In their view, humans were not solely and essentially altruistic, but had unrealized potential for



kindness and cooperation that was held in check by a social system that needlessly created false scarcity and violent conflict.<sup>35</sup> Anarchists pointed to the growth of institutions such as libraries, scientific societies, and social clubs as indicators that humans were increasingly organizing themselves, voluntarily, to accomplish their goals.<sup>36</sup>

In place of sovereign states, the anarchists agreed, workers should collectively self-manage their economic enterprises. From Proudhon forward, anarchists touted the benefits of a “federal” structure, in which workplaces or small communities would agree on how to run their affairs and then contract agreements with similar workgroups and communities further afield to accomplish tasks requiring more people or resources not locally available, always reserving a right to secede and go it on their own. Contrary to popular assumptions, then, anarchist theorists believed organizations to be necessary. However, they asserted that *voluntary* organizations were sufficient and suggested that responsibilities should be dispersed, rotated, or otherwise made accountable to the whole, as a means of minimizing the corrupting power of authority.<sup>37</sup>

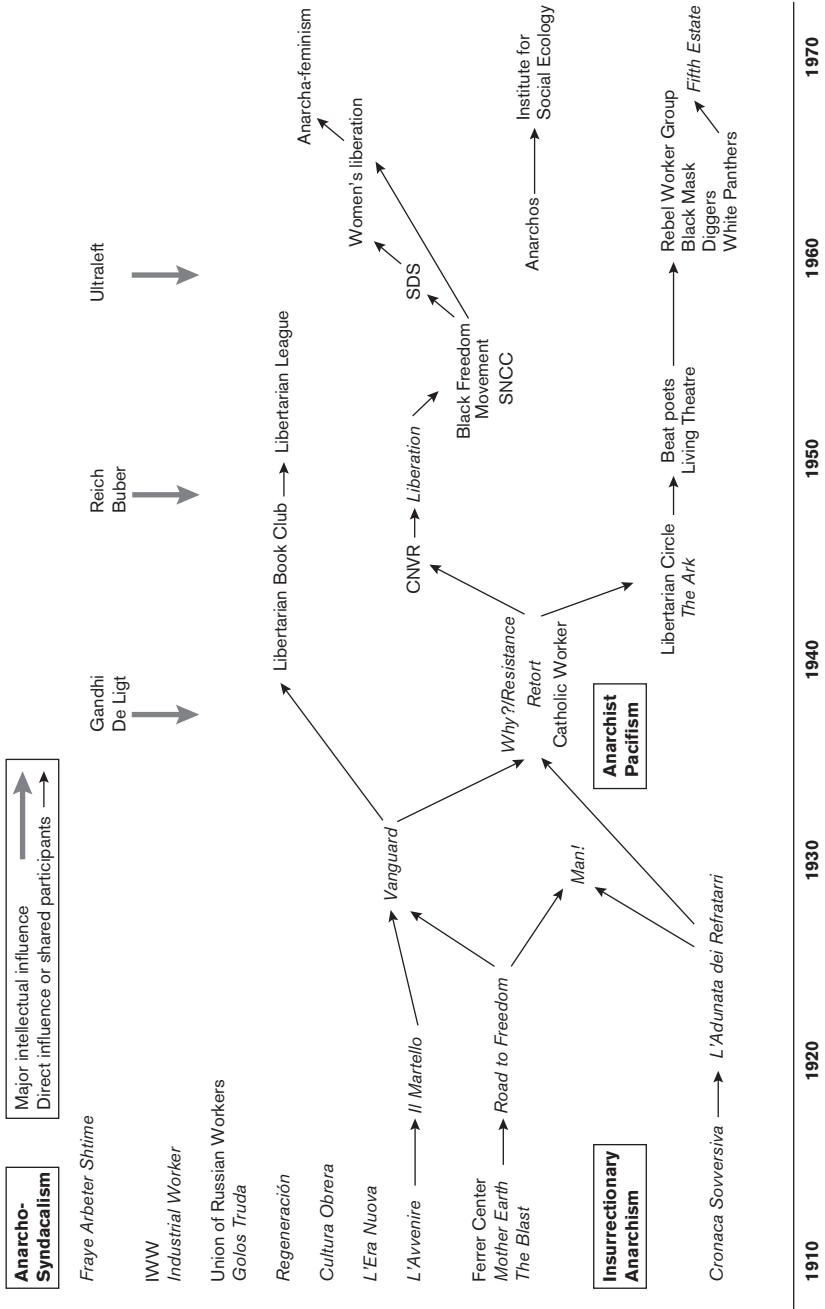
As early as the 1870s, they sought to practice these principles in their own organizations. Referring to the International Workingmen’s Association—which he was struggling, against Karl Marx, to lead—Bakunin wrote, “How can we expect an egalitarian and free society to emerge from an authoritarian organization? Impossible. The International, as the embryo of the human society of the future, is required in the here and now to faithfully mirror our principles of freedom and federation and shun any principle leaning towards authority and dictatorship.”<sup>38</sup>

Anarchists touted the benefits of free agreement, but said little about how disagreement would be managed. Since they saw repression as government’s overriding task, most viewed democratic deliberation as unnecessary. Imagining a postrevolutionary society, the German American anarchist Max Baginski asserted, “From the governing mania the foundation will be withdrawn; for those strata in society will be lacking which therefore had grown rich and fat by monopolizing the earth and its production. They alone needed legislatures to make laws against the disinherited.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, nineteenth-century anarchists paid little attention to international relations beyond calling for the dissolution of borders. Though they denounced imperialism, they did not offer a systematic account of the ways in which power functioned at scales greater than the nation-state, nor did they indicate how an anarchist society might defend itself against external attack.<sup>40</sup> As we will see, anarchist analysis of sexual and racial oppression remained skeletal until the early twentieth century.

Given these goals and these views on human nature, what was to be done? The anarchists' strategic thinking was informed by the restiveness of the poor in Europe and Russia during the nineteenth century, and by the modes of revolutionary action common to the French Revolution of 1789, the revolutions of 1848, and the Paris Commune of 1871. Each of these momentous events was characterized by a semispontaneous insurrection in which poor people used weapons to disrupt daily life in cities and to attack police and institutions of authority.<sup>41</sup> Anarchists also found inspiration in the late-nineteenth-century Russian nihilists and populists who, operating under conditions of extreme repression, organized conspiratorial cells that assiduously plotted to assassinate the czar and his officials, with hopes that such attacks would inspire, or "trigger," peasant uprisings.

When mass uprisings did occur, they frequently caught radicals off guard, but nevertheless buoyed their hopes and structured the ways they anticipated change would occur.<sup>42</sup> Anarchists analogized revolutions to weather patterns, which were hard to forecast with any precision. Yet because they believed inequality was increasing and workers were steadily becoming aware of alternatives, they firmly held that revolution would break out soon—within a few years. When it did, they were sure, life would change quickly and dramatically. This instilled a strategic and temporal imagination that implicitly divided anarchists' lives into three periods—before, during, and after the revolution—and provided a sense of real hope that, despite current sorrows, things would soon be better. Expressive of this faith, Lucy Robins Lang titled her autobiography *Tomorrow Is Beautiful*.

It was the responsibility of anarchists, then, to speed along the process of the poor becoming conscious and overcoming their fears. When the time came they would, according to the plan, steer the course of the revolutionary upheaval around pitfalls that had mired previous upsurges. Despite this focus on confrontation, many anarchists continued to see a role for the types of cooperative enterprises and intentional communities promoted by utopian socialists in the first half of the nineteenth century. This reflected the abiding influence of Proudhon, who hoped the creation of parallel institutions, such as a Bank of the People, could offset workers' dependence on capitalist institutions, draining the latter of their power. Anarchists believed that cooperatives and "colonies" could prove to fellow workers that, in contemporary parlance, "another world is possible." Given these models, early-twentieth-century U.S. anarchists generally agreed that they should practice mutual aid in their personal lives while working to convince their



Time line of key developments in twentieth-century U.S. anarchism.

fellow workers of the merits of a revolutionary strategy and preparing them to act.

### CLASS-STRUGGLE STRATEGIES

Since the time of the Haymarket Affair, anarchists in the United States (and elsewhere) had struggled to hone a strategy that moved sufficient numbers of working people to both develop oppositional consciousness and act to fundamentally restructure their lives. During the 1880s and 1890s, many had placed hope in “propaganda of the deed,” a strategy in which small, informal groups of anarchists sought to assassinate heads of state and other “class enemies.” They believed that such attacks would demonstrate the vulnerability of authority figures and inspire mass insurrections by resentful but previously intimidated workers.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the century, however, it was becoming apparent that propaganda of the deed prompted intense, sweeping repression of anarchists, exposed the movement to agent provocateurs, and alienated working people more often than it inspired them.<sup>44</sup>

In the early 1900s some European anarchists abandoned the insurrectionary strategy and returned to building revolutionary trade unions, or syndicates, as Bakunin had done in the 1870s, with hopes of developing stronger ties to working-class communities. These anarcho-syndicalists encouraged workers to fight for concessions in the short term while building the capacity to stage a general strike that would topple capitalism and parliamentary government later on. The unions themselves, practicing forms of power-sharing and accountable leadership, would serve as the foundation for the “self-management” of industry and society in general.

After 1905, groups of anarchists active in the United States pursued insurrectionary and syndicalist strategies simultaneously. During the same years, a bohemian anarchism that emphasized cultural transformation also emerged. These three orientations called for different organizational forms and strategies, creating tensions and disagreements in a movement already partitioned by language and culture.

#### *Anarcho-Syndicalism*

In the United States, the shift toward anarcho-syndicalism gained steam with the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1905.

The IWW dedicated itself to organizing working people into “one big union” and called for the use of direct action—strikes and workplace sabotage—rather than the electoral strategies promoted by the Socialist Party.<sup>45</sup> The founders expressed the fundamentals of revolutionary unionism in the preamble to the IWW’s constitution:

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.<sup>46</sup>

This might be thought of as a prefigurative organizing practice. As Bakunin had demanded of the International Workingmen’s Association (also known as the First International), the IWW’s founders believed their organization should function according to the egalitarian and participatory principles that they demanded in the wider world. They intended not only to avoid hypocrisy but also to provide a venue for previously ignored and disenfranchised people to begin *practicing* freedom—implicitly acknowledging that running one’s own affairs might require more than simple intuition.

As Salvatore Salerno has argued, “The nature of the influence of anarchist principles and tactics on the industrial union movement was complex and ubiquitous.”<sup>47</sup> Native-born and immigrant anarchists participated in the union’s founding convention. Some, such as Al Klemensic and Lucy Parsons, explicitly linked the new organization’s strategy to the independent, militant unionism practiced by the Chicago anarchists before the Haymarket Affair.<sup>48</sup> However, anarchist “Wobblies” (as members of the IWW were known) shared the organization with members of the Socialist Party, Marxists who would later become leading communists, and labor organizers with less precise ideological pedigrees.

The growth of the IWW significantly enhanced the U.S. anarchist movement’s ability to recruit new participants and influence the course of labor struggles. Anarchists had long criticized the American Federation of Labor (AFL) for its leaders’ reformist goals, timidity, and exclusions. In 1906, Max Baginski wrote, “Condemned to pasture in the lean meadows of capitalistic economy, trade unionism drags on a miserable existence, satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the heavily laden tables of their lordly masters. . . . The American Federation of Labor is lobbying in Washington, begging for legal protection, and in return venal Justice sends Winchester rifles and drunken

militiamen into the disturbed labor districts.<sup>49</sup> With no viable alternative in sight, anarchists had long encouraged workers to take action on their own. The IWW changed that by providing more concrete guidance and resources, such as traveling organizers and strike funds (meager as these often were). Unlike affiliates of the AFL, the IWW organized workers across divisions of race, nationality, gender, and skill and encouraged collaboration with workers in other countries.<sup>50</sup> Although they remained critical of the nonanarchist participants, many influential anarchists encouraged their followers to join the One Big Union. For this reason, recognizing the successes and setbacks of the IWW is necessary in order to comprehend the fate of the anarchist movement in the early twentieth century.

The IWW is best known for its use of workplace sabotage, frequent work stoppages, and advocacy of the general strike tactic, but Wobblies also developed a vibrant cultural movement.<sup>51</sup> Wobbly songs (most notably “Solidarity Forever”) became anthems of the U.S. labor movement, but members also produced plays, poetry, and political cartoons that lambasted the wealthy.<sup>52</sup> Wobblies engaged in a series of “free speech fights” throughout the American West between 1908 and 1918 that reverberated in broader struggles to expand freedom of expression.<sup>53</sup> The IWW’s promotion of a brash working-class counterculture gelled with the oppositional cultures and communities that German and Italian radical immigrants had cultivated for more than twenty-five years. This helps explain why many circles of syndicalist-minded anarchists were apt to join the IWW shortly after its formation.<sup>54</sup>

In March 1906, anarchists of Paterson, New Jersey, affiliated with the IWW and placed the union’s logo on the masthead of their newspaper, *La Questione Sociale* (The social question). This collaboration led the IWW to launch twenty-four strikes in Paterson that year alone, preparing the ground for the momentous garment worker’s strike of 1913. After *La Questione Sociale* was suppressed by the federal government in 1908, it was revived under the name *L’Era Nuova* (The new era) and served as a leading voice for union-oriented Italian anarchists, reaching a circulation of approximately three thousand copies per issue—a third of them read by supporters in the Paterson area.<sup>55</sup>

Carlo Tresca, the most influential organizer of Italian laborers in the United States, declared himself an anarcho-syndicalist in 1914.<sup>56</sup> Born to a landowning family in central Italy, Tresca became a socialist agitator and fled the country at the age of twenty-five to avoid imprisonment. Debonair and genial, Tresca worked closely with the IWW on some of its most decisive strikes, such as the 1912 Lawrence textile strike and the 1916 Mesabi Range

strike. His newspaper, *L'Avvenire* (The future), complemented *L'Era Nuova* as a prominent mouthpiece for revolutionary unionism among Italians, reaching a circulation of approximately four thousand copies per issue before World War I.<sup>57</sup>

Anarchists from Russia, too, embraced syndicalism in the early twentieth century. After the abortive 1905 revolution against czarism, a wave of exiles settled in North America and established the Union of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada.<sup>58</sup> By 1912 the union had pronounced itself an anarcho-syndicalist organization; in its eleven years of existence, it grew to an estimated four thousand to ten thousand members organized into approximately fifty local chapters. It published a monthly newspaper, *Golos Truda* (The voice of labor), and established social and educational centers such as the Russian People's House in New York City.<sup>59</sup> Like the Italian syndicalists, the Union of Russian Workers developed close ties with the IWW, and leading figures such as Vladimir "Bill" Shatoff sought to recruit workers into both organizations.

While some Russian Jews affiliated with the Union of Russian Workers, others gravitated to Yiddish-speaking circles that read the weekly newspaper *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (The free voice of labor).<sup>60</sup> The paper was edited by Saul Yanovsky, a hardworking but tactless orator who had organized Jewish anarchists in London before taking on responsibilities with the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*. After professed anarchist Leon Czolgosz assassinated President McKinley in 1901, Yanovsky convinced the majority of Jewish American anarchists to reject propaganda of the deed in favor of nonviolent trade union, educational, and cooperative activity. A willingness to participate in unions affiliated with the AFL also distinguished Jewish anarchists from those of other nationalities.<sup>61</sup> Although criticized as insufficiently confrontational by other anarchists, this strategy proved attractive to large numbers of Yiddish-speaking immigrants; New York City alone was home to at least ten Jewish anarchist groups, and the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* reached a circulation of more than twenty thousand copies *per week* in the decade before the First World War.<sup>62</sup>

The second decade of the twentieth century also witnessed the rise of Spanish-speaking anarchist communities in the United States. In the northeast, immigrants from Spain often socialized with the more numerous Italian anarchist communities. Pedro Esteve, an organizer hailing from Barcelona, married an Italian immigrant, Maria Roda, and recruited Spanish- and Italian-speaking dockworkers for the IWW while editing the monthly

*Cultura Obrera* (Workers' culture).<sup>63</sup> Esteve also tried to build a movement among Cuban cigar workers in Ybor City, Florida, but was run out of town by conservative vigilantes.

Efforts on the East Coast were greatly overshadowed by the initiatives of Spanish-speaking anarchists in northern Mexico and the American Southwest. There, anarchism grew out of the broader movement seeking to replace the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz with a liberal democracy. To escape prosecution, leading liberal agitators, including Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magón, took refuge in the United States after 1904. The Magóns were born to modest means, but Ricardo completed law school before launching the newspaper *Regeneración* (Regeneration).

After the Magóns and other members of the Partido Liberal Mexicano established ties with radicals and labor organizers in the United States, their politics moved swiftly to the left. The organization built support for massive strikes in the copper mining industry and planned a series of abortive insurrections along the Texas border, earning the conspirators time in American prisons. Yet by 1910, *Regeneración* was read on both sides of the border by upward of thirty thousand farm laborers, miners, and other poor Mexicans, and it openly advocated anarchist politics and called for international working-class revolution.

When the Mexican Revolution broke out in November, the exiles and their allies launched a military expedition to occupy the cities of Mexicali, Tecate, and Tijuana, with the intent of establishing anarchist communes based on Kropotkin's vision. Routed by troops of the new republican government, the Magón brothers continued publishing *Regeneración* from Los Angeles, nurturing an anarchist movement among ethnic Mexicans in both countries.<sup>64</sup> Anarchists in other parts of the United States avidly followed the crisis in Mexico as it simultaneously put syndicalist and insurrectionary strategies to the test.

### *Insurrectionary Anarchism*

Although interest in building revolutionary unions spread quickly after the IWW was established, anarcho-syndicalism did not completely displace the insurrectionary strategy that relied heavily on propaganda of the deed. In the early twentieth century, insurrectionary anarchism was promoted most eloquently and stridently in the United States by Luigi Galleani, an Italian militant in his fifties who had spent much of his adult life in exile or prison.



*Cronaca Sovversiva* (Subversive chronicle), the newspaper Galleani published from Barre, Vermont, reached a circulation of approximately five thousand, and small groups of Italian insurrectionists established themselves in dozens of cities and mining towns throughout the Northeast, the Midwest, and California.<sup>65</sup>

Galleani spurned the strategy of helping workers win immediate improvements in their lives, claiming such reforms would be short-lived and would only stabilize the system. In a major statement of his politics, Galleani wrote, “Since the anarchists value reforms for what they are—the ballast the bourgeoisie throws overboard to lighten its old boat in the hope of saving the sad cargo of its privileges from sinking in the revolutionary storm—they have no particular interest in them except to discredit their dangerous mirage, for they are sure that social reforms will come anyway, faster, more often and more radically, as attacks against the existing social institutions become more forceful and violent.”<sup>66</sup> This thinking led him to encourage anarchists to engage in propaganda of the deed, retributive violence against authority figures, and acts of banditry and individual expropriation until accumulated resentment had pushed the broader population to insurrection.

As Vincenzo Ferrero, one of his associates, explained, “Galleani was not an individualist but was opposed to formal organization. He was for spontaneous cooperation and spontaneous action.”<sup>67</sup> Galleani felt that anarchist federations and labor unions that delegated specific powers and responsibilities to members would suffer from the same corrupting tendencies as states. He had also witnessed the ways in which formal, public organizations had attracted police infiltration and repression in Italy.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, while syndicalists saw their unions as embryonic institutions of the new society, Galleani asserted that revolutionaries could not and *should* not predict the form that postrevolutionary social structures would take until after the event itself. He firmly believed that ordinary people would intuitively know how to live equitably and peacefully once the corrupting institutions of the state and capitalism had been dismantled.

For these reasons, *Cronaca Sovversiva* readers were often labeled “antiorganizational” anarchists. Nevertheless, they formed tight-knit communities of self-selecting individuals who worked closely with one another over long stretches of time, communities that proved nearly impossible for police and government agents to infiltrate.<sup>69</sup> Within these communities, Galleani was treated with such reverence, and proved such a domineering presence, that *Cronaca Sovversiva* readers were frequently called “Galleanists” in spite of the

anarchist antipathy for designating leaders. In these ways, the Italian insurrectionaries experienced both the benefits and the consequences of the small-group model: increased internal security on the one hand, and challenges associated with isolation and unofficial leadership on the other.

In short, both anarcho-syndicalists and insurrectionary anarchists focused on overturning class oppression, but they held opposing views on matters of strategy and organization.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, while insurrectionists advocated proactive violence against class enemies, syndicalists typically defended the use of violence only in situations of self-defense (although most acknowledged they would need to defend the anticipated general strike with arms). Differences between the two tendencies at times erupted into internecine fighting. Galleani and his comrades were rebuked by the IWW when they offered to lead agitation in the Italian community during the 1912 Lawrence textile strike. The choice of Carlo Tresca to lead a campaign to free Wobblies jailed during that conflict spiraled into a long-running polemic, during which Galleani declared, "We will no longer travel on the same path: no longer can you be an anarchist!"<sup>71</sup> At other times, especially when anarchists faced prosecution, differences were downplayed within the movement, with the intent of maintaining as much unity as possible. Outside the movement, the important distinctions between syndicalist and insurrectionary tendencies were largely lost on the public and ignored by security agencies that viewed anarchism as an amorphous, inscrutable threat.

#### **BOHEMIAN ANARCHISM—NEW ALLIES AND EMPHASES**

The movement's most effective English-speaking agitators, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, embraced radical unionism after 1905 but never fully repudiated the forms of political violence by which they'd earned their reputations. Russian Jews who had migrated to the United States in the 1880s, Goldman and Berkman both improved their English skills during spells in prison. Goldman became the country's most provocative and tireless anarchist orator during the fourteen years, from 1893 to 1906, that Berkman was incarcerated for the attempted assassination of strikebreaking steel magnate Henry Clay Frick.<sup>72</sup> Released from prison in 1906, Berkman gave powerful voice, in English, to an anarchism that shared its focus with the Yiddish-, Italian-, Russian-, and Spanish-speaking sectors of the movement, finally making some headway with native-born manual laborers. In 1916 he

launched the searing monthly newspaper *The Blast* in San Francisco. However, the growth of anarchism among English speakers owed as much to the innovative appeals Goldman made to wealthier Americans as it did to a redoubling of efforts among tradesmen.

For the first quarter-century of its existence, the U.S. anarchist movement, like its counterparts abroad, had focused on fomenting a revolution to secure economic well-being for workers. Yet anarchists throughout the world found much to admire in the strands of modernist thought and art that shook up intellectual life at the turn of the century. Goldman—an international traveler and voracious reader—digested Nietzsche, Freud, German sexological studies, and realist drama. Each of these thinkers and literatures exposed ways in which social conventions and outmoded ideas restricted the lives of social groups such as women and homosexuals; each called for new modes of inquiry and expanded personal freedoms. Goldman's greatest intellectual contribution was her synthesis of ideas from these fields with traditional anarchist ideology. Her towering reputation owes to her success at building new coalitions of political actors while simultaneously articulating intellectual frameworks. Together, these efforts led U.S. anarchism into unexplored territory. In a piecemeal, exploratory fashion, a third strategic orientation emerged in the U.S. anarchist movement in the fifteen years preceding the First World War. I refer to it as a bohemian anarchism owing to the attention participants placed on sexuality and artistic expression, and to its tendency to attract intellectually inclined, middle-class radicals.<sup>73</sup>

When she was not on the lecture circuit, Goldman lived in Lower Manhattan, near Greenwich Village, which was fast becoming a magnet for creative and free-thinking young people. The premium they placed on communicating personal visions over achieving commercial success, along with their penchant for bucking sexual and sartorial conventions, greatly appealed to her. Goldman founded the journal *Mother Earth* in 1906, explaining that her editorial decisions would “aim for unity between revolutionary effort and artistic expression.”<sup>74</sup> Although the journal never achieved the literary standards set by contemporary publications such as *The Masses*, it gave the anarchists a “little magazine” of their own and established Goldman and her collaborators as players in the bohemian intellectual and artistic milieu that bloomed in these years.<sup>75</sup>

The circle of anarchists that produced *Mother Earth* lauded *expression* in many guises: the voicing of unpopular ideas in print and in public oration; the open declaration of carnal desires by women and homosexuals; the right

of women to create lives outside of marriage and the home if they so desired; responsiveness to interests communicated by children in the schoolroom and the home; and the expression of emotions and submerged perspectives in the visual arts and drama.

### *Defending Free Speech*

Goldman first developed relationships with progressive reformers through her work to defend freedom of speech and press for radicals. After a professed anarchist assassinated President McKinley in 1901, federal and state governments prohibited anarchists from entering the country and set long jail sentences for anyone advocating the forcible overthrow of the government. These measures compounded the Comstock laws, dating back to 1873, which allowed postal officials to suppress the circulation of “obscene” materials, including information on birth control and sexuality. Goldman became a spokesperson and fund-raiser for the Free Speech League, an organization formed by lawyers and journalists in 1902 to advocate civil liberties and provide council to those arrested for violating speech codes.<sup>76</sup>

Members of the IWW were jailed or assaulted so routinely that the union was forced to organize a series of “free speech fights” between 1907 and 1914 simply to defend the right to openly criticize capitalism. Goldman, herself, was arrested upward of *forty* times for attempting to speak publicly. In response, the group of anarchists who helped publish *Mother Earth* tirelessly organized chapters of the Free Speech League, which appealed to wealthy progressives who believed in upholding basic civil rights.<sup>77</sup> After gaining their admiration, Goldman drew well-positioned allies into other anarchist causes, tapping them frequently for funds and the influence their names could bring to a cause.<sup>78</sup> Anarchists’ work to promote civil liberties, therefore, opened space in the public sphere that they needed in order to launch more radical initiatives, while it also built ties to new social groups and enlarged movement coffers.

### *Exploding Norms of Gender and Sexuality*

Goldman also made middle-class allies through her promotion of women’s rights. After attending a birth control conference in Paris, Goldman called for the right of women to practice “family limitation.” Following her lead, anarchists provided logistical support for Margaret Sanger, the country’s

most prominent advocate of birth control—printing her pamphlets, for instance, when professional shops refused to do so out of fear of prosecution.<sup>79</sup> Goldman also studied research on homosexuality and became an outspoken defender of same-sex love, lecturing on the topic as early as 1899. Like a variety of other social and individualist anarchists, Goldman believed “the sex organs . . . are the property of the individual possessing them, and that the individual and no other must be the sole authority and Judge of his or her acts.”<sup>80</sup> Sexual freedom clearly fell within the purview of the anarchists’ politics, given their defense of a liberty to act that was limited only by respect for the equal liberty of others. For this reason, the anarchist communities of New York and a number of other locales provided sanctuary and acceptance for gay men and lesbians in a time of near universal hostility toward them.<sup>81</sup>

Though Goldman was respected by many, her iconoclastic gender and sexual politics strained her relations with many feminist contemporaries. As an anarchist communist she categorically rejected the suffragist argument that obtaining the right to vote would lead to the liberation of women. Although her own experiences taught her that economic independence was necessary for women to control their own lives, she was clear that securing the right to perform wage labor in a capitalist work environment was a half measure at best.<sup>82</sup>

Goldman was sometimes accused of promoting individualistic strategies of emancipation. She wrote, for example, that a woman’s “development, her freedom, her independence, must come from and through herself.” A woman could bring these about by “refusing the right to anyone over her body” and “by freeing herself from the fear of public opinion and public condemnation.”<sup>83</sup> Yet, to Goldman, these practices of personal self-definition and assertiveness were only one aspect of the struggle. As Kathy Ferguson has argued, Goldman promoted an analysis of sexual politics that later theorists would describe as “biopolitical.”<sup>84</sup> She understood that political elites and business owners each had a stake in regulating the number of children born into a society’s various racial groups and social classes. “The defenders of authority,” she declared, “dread the advent of a free motherhood, lest it will rob them of their prey. Who would fight wars? Who would create wealth?”<sup>85</sup> To Goldman’s mind, the moralistic language of the church worked to obfuscate the fact that social and legal pressures placed these population-level interests above the personal concerns of individuals, encroaching on the way women and men related to their sexual urges and made use of their bodies.

Class and sexual-gender oppression were thus intimately linked in Goldman's theory.

Nevertheless, Goldman was routinely criticized by male anarchists who focused narrowly on class struggle and paid little mind to the nature of their personal relations with women. Despite routine calls for gender equality after the revolution, social anarchists devoted little attention, before the turn of the century, to systematically analyzing patriarchy as a form of power that structured society and their own lives. Even among those living as unmarried couples or sharing apartments with comrades, cleaning and cooking responsibilities generally fell to women.<sup>86</sup> Goldman was not alone in her efforts to change this.<sup>87</sup>

Beginning in 1896, female anarcho-syndicalists established a network of "gruppi femminili di propaganda" in the cities and mining towns where Italian radicals lived.<sup>88</sup> The groups, ranging in size from a few to a few dozen members, were composed of working women, who often tried to incorporate their daughters into their activities. Participants, such as Maria Roda, Ernestina Cravello, and Maria Barbieri, contributed frequently to the anarchist press and produced plays that challenged Catholic morality. The group in Spring Valley, Illinois, argued in the pages of *L'Aurora*: "For the emancipation of women, together with those struggles that must occur in order to attain the rights that all of oppressed humanity demand[,] . . . a woman must struggle with great zeal to emancipate herself from the tyranny and prejudice of men, and from those who foolishly consider women inferior, and often treat her like a slave."<sup>89</sup>

Most participants worked in factories while also performing the bulk of the unpaid reproductive labor, such as cooking and cleaning, required to raise a family. For these women, feminist activism had to challenge the economic system as well as deprecating treatment by men. Most operated at a distance from wealthier feminists, because they saw those women as complicit in the oppression of women of the working classes.<sup>90</sup> In 1905 Maria Barbieri wrote, "We have become human machines who stay locked in the immense industrial prisons where we lose our strength, our health and youth. . . . [And] we don't shake with rage before the pompous and contemptuous lady, who because of us wears a silk skirt from our humble labor?"<sup>91</sup> Goldman associated with these Italian working-class feminists, and their perspectives likely shaped her criticisms of suffrage-centered feminism. Yet, as a self-supporting editor and organizer now fluent in English, Goldman found it easier to transcend these class divisions.

After 1910, Goldman began consciously tailoring some of her lectures to appeal to middle-class audiences. She spoke frequently on the political morals of modern drama, explaining to skeptical comrades that while workers are moved to radical politics by injustices in their own lives, drama served as an important means of helping more privileged intellectuals understand social conditions and reconsider their “relation to the people, to the social unrest permeating the atmosphere.” In *Mother Earth*, Goldman argued that artists and professionals were, at base, “intellectual proletarians” who had the ability to make important contributions to the social struggle if they choose to do so. “It is therefore through the co-operation of the intellectual proletarians, who try to find expression, and the revolutionary proletarians who seek to remold life,” she wrote, “that we in America will establish a real unity and by means of it wage a successful war against present society.”<sup>92</sup> During these years it became common for Goldman to deliver a speech in Yiddish one night and another in English the following evening. Drawing on figures published in *Mother Earth*, Peter Glassgold gives a sense of her reach:

1910: 120 lectures in 37 cities in 25 states, before a total of 40,000 people, selling 10,000 pieces of literature, distributing 5,000 free, netting over \$5,300 in sales, magazine subscriptions, and paid admissions. 1911: 150 lectures in 50 cities in 18 states, before audiences of up to 1,500 people, a total of 50,000 to 60,000 at the tour’s end. 1915: 321 lectures. By her own accounting, Goldman spoke before 50,000 to 75,000 people a year.<sup>93</sup>

### *Denouncing Racial Violence While Being Racialized*

While Goldman served as an important bridge between feminist initiatives and the tradition of immigrant anarchism, her political work was not as far reaching in the struggle to combat white supremacy. Like other anarchists of the prewar period, Goldman regularly denounced lynchings of African Americans and noted the “racial hatred” directed against other groups, such as Chinese immigrants. Yet as Kathy Ferguson has argued, “Goldman usually mentioned race only in passing, to illustrate yet another example of the exploitation of the masses, not as a unique vector of power with its own logic and history.”<sup>94</sup> Ferguson suggests that Goldman made sense of racism in the United States primarily by comparing it to the anti-Semitic treatment of Jews in Europe and Russia. From this perspective, racism appeared as another undesirable outgrowth of “Christian civilization” and a convenient means of keeping working people estranged from one another. During the Progressive

Era, Goldman tended to describe African Americans as unfortunate victims rather than as the oppressed but potentially powerful collective agents she believed laborers and women to be. The campaigns for broader political rights and governmental protections pursued by many black citizens, often under the auspices of the church, seem to have struck her as insufficiently revolutionary.<sup>95</sup>

Other sectors of the movement proved more attuned to the centrality of race to the country's development. Italian anarcho-syndicalists articulated strident antiracist and anticolonial critiques. A 1909 article in *L'Era Nuova* argued, "The discovery of America marks the beginning of a period of destruction, which lasts even today for the shame of humanity. The white race continues its systematic destruction of the races of color. When it cannot succeed with violence, it adopts corruption, hunger, alcohol, opium, syphilis, tuberculosis—all weapons as good as guns and cannons." The article acknowledged the centrality of racial oppression to the structure of U.S. American society and hinted at the transformative potential of black freedom struggles: "We believe that within a short time what they call the Negro Problem will give more trouble to the United States, more than they have already had from any other serious issue, even bigger than the Civil War."<sup>96</sup>

Spanish-speaking anarchists, too, regularly addressed racism. Given that their primary U.S. readership consisted of a racialized national minority that had steadily been dispossessed of its land since the end of the Mexican-American War, it is not surprising that the Magón brothers regularly denounced the racist treatment of Mexican Americans. Placing the 1910 lynching of a Mexican man in the context of structural racism, Ricardo Flores Magón cleverly highlighted the constructed character of the idea of savagery. "Mexicans are not admitted to hotels, restaurants, and other public establishments in Texas," he asserted. "How many men of our race have died because a white-skinned savage decided to prove his ability with firearms by shooting at us?—and without having any dispute with us!"<sup>97</sup> Beyond anarchists' written analyses, their most concrete contributions to combating structural racism may have lain in their work of building interracial unions that opposed exclusionary hiring practices and racist wage differentials.

Even those anarchists who denounced structural and personal violence against indigenous peoples and peoples of African and Mexican descent appear unaware of the ways they were implicated in the larger racial system that structured all aspects of life in the United States. Following the massive influx of poor immigrants—first from Ireland, and later from southern and



eastern Europe—U.S. citizens established a complex racial system in which recent arrivals held an intermediary position between native-born whites and peoples of color, wherein they were expected to prove their fitness for social inclusion through self-comportment, their treatment of other racial groups, and the beliefs they espoused.<sup>98</sup> As Jewish, Russian, and Italian immigrants, the majority of anarchists in the United States were considered part of these “inbetween people.”<sup>99</sup> As *anarchists*, they had an inadvertent but significant role in the establishment of such a racial category in the first place. The antiauthoritarian ideas, political violence, and sexual nonconformism practiced by anarchists became grist for nativists and conservative journalists, who represented the new immigrants, as a whole, as unfit for U.S. citizenship. Such representational practices functioned as part of a larger process of racialization in which inegalitarian social structures and demeaning cultural depictions of social groups developed in a mutually reinforcing manner.<sup>100</sup>

The view of anarchists as European immigrants with a congenital proclivity to violence became a common trope during the Red Scare that followed the Haymarket Affair of 1886, in which a bomb killed police officers attempting to disperse an anarchist rally.<sup>101</sup> Newspaper editors and cartoonists routinely depicted anarchists as animals, infectious pests, and as tools of the devil.<sup>102</sup> When graced with a human form, anarchists were nearly always drawn with dark skin, scraggly beards, a hunched posture, and bulging eyes.<sup>103</sup> While such imagery implied insanity, it also keyed to the era’s stock racist depictions of African Americans.<sup>104</sup> Thomas Nast, a cartoonist famous for drawing Irish immigrants as simian-like, helped hone this caricature through his illustrations of the anarchist Johann Most. Nast visually cemented the connection when he created a cover for *Puck* magazine that pictured anarchism as a snake with an ape-like human head.<sup>105</sup> As Kenyon Zimmer has shown, the influential criminologist Cesare Lombroso lent such associations a patina of scientific truth when he “diagnosed the anarchist as a specific ‘criminal type’ characterized by mental and physical abnormalities, all rooted in biological ‘atavism’ and therefore heritable.”<sup>106</sup>

Publishers revived these racist representations after Leon Czolgosz assassinated President McKinley in 1901, but with a twist.<sup>107</sup> After Czolgosz claimed he was inspired by Goldman’s lectures, journalists insisted she had been the mastermind behind the crime. Newspapers alternately depicted her as a devil and a seductress, owing to her notoriety as proponent of “free love.”<sup>108</sup> This should not be surprising, as sexual practices have historically formed a primary means by which “white” people have evaluated the

civilizational standing of others. Time and again, sexual and familial practices have been deemed dangerous when departing from middle-class Christian norms, thereby justifying the differential treatment of people of other “races.” Given the ways racism structured life in the United States, therefore, anarchists’ nonnormative sexual practices, like their embrace of political violence, had repercussions that extended far beyond their own movement.

In the wake of anarchist attacks, the incidence of a threat originating within a group (poor southern and eastern European immigrants) was generalized to an intrinsic quality of the whole, leading to what William Preston Jr. describes as “a fateful and erroneous identification of alien and radical” that would endure for decades.<sup>109</sup> As John Higham wrote over fifty years ago, “The anti-radical tradition remained a major nativist attitude, picturing the foreigner as steeped in anarchism or at least as an incendiary menace to that orderly freedom which Americans alone could supposedly preserve.”<sup>110</sup> In this sense, *anarchist* functioned as a racializing term during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the racial status of European immigrants was uncertain.<sup>111</sup>

### *Developing Modern Education*

In the early decades of the twentieth century, U.S. anarchists pursued educational work with greater élan than they had previously, by speaking eloquently in English, linking anarchism to a wider variety of issues, and creating new institutional platforms for the work of consciousness-raising and the transmission of values. Notably, mainstays of the *Mother Earth* circle, such as Harry Kelly and Leonard Abbot, bolstered anarchist educational and cultural efforts by establishing the Francisco Ferrer Center in 1912. Named after an anarchist educator executed by the Spanish government, the center hosted evening and weekend classes for adults and a day school for the children of radical workers.<sup>112</sup> Ferrer maintained that schools established by church and state officials reproduced class relations and authoritarian values. Yet “modern schools” that supported children’s own curiosities and promoted libertarian and cooperative values could help bring a new society into being.<sup>113</sup>

The Ferrer Center served as a meeting ground in which the city’s many anarchist groups interacted with one another and the broader Left. On Friday nights, multiethnic crowds of manual laborers and intellectuals packed in to hear talks delivered by famous figures such the lawyer Clarence

Darrow and the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens.<sup>114</sup> “Among subjects threshed out,” Harry Kelly recalled, “were economics, politics, sex, psychology, psychoanalysis, literature, art, drama, the Single Tax, Socialism, Guild Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism.”<sup>115</sup> This burst of activity was paid for, in the main, by wealthy benefactors Goldman had cultivated in her free-speech fights, such as Alden Freeman, an heir to Standard Oil money who, as a gay man, appreciated her lectures on sexuality.<sup>116</sup>

### *Promoting Artistic Modernism*

The Ferrer Center also helped establish artistic modernism in the United States. In Europe, modernist painters such as Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, and Kees van Dongen had established ties to anarchists in the 1890s. The artists incorporated anarchist critiques of wealth inequality, despoliation of nature, and colonialism into paintings intended for bourgeois galleries and into satirical cartoons published in anarchist newspapers.<sup>117</sup> After the turn of the century, like their counterparts abroad, a growing coterie of American artists worked to break the power art academies held in arbitrating what subject matter and which formal techniques qualified a work as fine art.<sup>118</sup> Anarchists supported these efforts, establishing partnerships that would shape the future of their movement as they did so.

Among the leading opponents of academic art in the United States was Robert Henri, a painter inspired by the illustrators of Emile Pouget’s scandalous French anarcho-syndicalist journal, *Le Père Peinard*.<sup>119</sup> After befriending Goldman, Henri launched an art seminar at the Ferrer Center in 1911, covering the walls with examples of the new styles and attracting students such as George Bellows, Rockwell Kent, and Man Ray, all of whom later gained recognition as canonical American modernists. Max Weber, a Ferrer Center artist and early proponent of futurist and cubist techniques, encouraged his fellow students at the center to “take time off from the life-[drawing] class,” and “go out among the people who toil in the mills and shops, go to scenes of bridge construction, foundries, excavation” to capture the zeitgeist of the times.<sup>120</sup>

Welcomed by anarchists at the Ferrer Center, Greenwich Village bohemians reciprocated by inviting anarchists to literary salons and by lending financial and moral support to workers fighting to unionize. Most famously, Village artists staged the *Paterson Pageant*, a play in which striking silk workers from Paterson, New Jersey, dramatized their struggle before a capacity

crowd in Madison Square Garden. Anarchist writers such as Hutchins Hapgood repaid the favor, showering praise on the city's modern artists. While other critics panned the Armory Show of 1913, now credited with introducing European postimpressionism to American audiences, Hapgood defended it as "vital" and compared it to the IWW's attempts to overthrow "old forms and traditions."<sup>121</sup> Similar collaborations between artists and anarchists also bloomed in Chicago and rural "artists colonies," such as Provincetown, Massachusetts.<sup>122</sup>

In this way *anarchism* became a byword for fearless, innovative expression, and artists saw anarchists as allies and a source of inspiration, even if they rarely adopted anarchist ideas *tout court*.<sup>123</sup> As a result, some anarchists began to view avant-garde cultural expression and innovative forms of education as strategies for inculcating libertarian and egalitarian values that might supplement, if not entirely supplant, older models of change. In 1916, though, these cultural strategies were only emergent tendencies in the broader anarchist movement. Promotion of sexual, artistic, and educational freedom was just beginning to elbow in on the issue of economic injustice and the strategies of syndicalism and insurrection.

A crisis that occurred in 1914 suggests the challenges of integrating these forms of struggle. That summer, while painters daubed canvases and school-children played games on the first floor of the Ferrer Center, Berkman and a half dozen associates met in the center's basement to plot an attack on the suburban mansion of John D. Rockefeller, whom they held responsible for the April massacre of striking miners in Ludlow, Colorado. However, on the Fourth of July, three anarchists and a bystander died when the bomb that the three were preparing in a nearby apartment house accidentally exploded.<sup>124</sup>

The response to this incident indicated the depth of class antagonism during this period. Some twenty thousand people attended a memorial rally in Union Square to honor those who lost their lives. From the dais, Berkman and others boldly endorsed the type of political violence their expired comrades had intended to carry out. Clearly, anarchism proved attractive to a significant swath of society, and, in the face of the brutal repression of unionists, thousands of people saw retributive political violence as acceptable, perhaps even necessary.

Yet despite the facade of unity at the memorial, Harry Kelly and others who ran the Ferrer Center were growing weary of armed attacks and recognized that it was unwise to hold elementary school classes a few feet above a room used to plan acts of terrorism. In response, Kelly hatched a plan to

move the school to a more serene environment outside the city. To pay for the school, anarchists would collectively buy a piece of farmland and carve it into residential plots, leaving a few acres for the school at the center. As we will see in chapter 3, this dream came to fruition in the spring of 1915 with the creation of the Stelton Colony near present-day New Brunswick, New Jersey.<sup>125</sup>

### STRATEGY AND THEORIES OF POWER

Although immediate danger was averted by moving the Modern School out of the city, the underlying tensions in the anarchist movement were not so easy to solve. As early as 1908, Kelly voiced a broadly shared concern that the English-speaking sector was growing detached from the foreign-language sectors and becoming “a movement for individual self-expression rather than collective revolution.” He worried that “instead of participating in the trade unions, organizing the unemployed, or indulging in soap box oratory, we rent comfortable halls and charge ten cents admission.”<sup>126</sup>

Kelly was hardly alone in his class-centric thinking; his perspective was dominant among anarchists and was a defining feature of the pre-World War II “old left” more broadly. The anarchist Kate Wolfson recalled that in the second decade of the twentieth century, she and her sister “went to Emma Goldman’s lectures on drama and birth control, which we regarded as secondary issues. We were fiery young militants and more concerned with economic and labor issues, and we resented her dwelling on such things as theater.”<sup>127</sup> This was not entirely fair criticism, since many anarchists managed to support workers’ struggles *and* reach out to wealthier audiences in this period. Perhaps a deeper problem was that the new emphases chafed against a variety of assumptions at the heart of anarchist social theory.

Berkman, for instance, regularly published news and analysis about Goldman and Sanger’s birth control efforts in *The Blast*. Yet he felt the need to frame and delimit agitation around gender inequality for readers. In a short article criticizing the suffrage movement, he wrote, “It is not woman, as a sex, that is the victim of existing conditions. It is only the *working* woman—exactly as the working man.”<sup>128</sup> Reproductive freedom, he implied, was a worthy cause only insofar as it aided working-class women and provided leverage in the class struggle. But by focusing on realms of expressive freedom, Goldman and her collaborators not only discovered new middle- and upper-class constituencies for the movement but also added novel layers

of complexity to anarchists' notions of how power operates, what freedom entails, and what forms of action are most suited to bringing about change.

Without abandoning class issues, Goldman and the Italian anarchist feminists had begun to craft an analysis that suggested male domination functioned in unique ways and emanated from individuals and institutions additional to the sources of class domination. Implicit in such a view was the idea that anarchists would need to develop new strategies and tactics to address these forms of oppression if they were truly committed to their core values of liberty, equality, and solidarity. Put differently, twenty-first-century U.S. anarchists would criticize Kelly for propounding a "class reductionist" rather than an "intersectional" analysis that understood domination to occur simultaneously on a variety of axes—namely, those of class, race, gender, and sexuality—in ways that reinforced one another.

Kelly's question about whether social change demanded the concerted effort of "masses" of people acting in unison, or whether it could be affected through the piecemeal efforts of individuals and small groups, also relates to this issue. Implicit in his advocacy of the former position lay an understanding of the conditions of freedom and unfreedom based in class relations under capitalism. Since it was nearly impossible for propertyless workers to support themselves outside of a capitalist economy, structural transformation was seen as the only realistic way to achieve economic freedom. Taking class conflict as the implicit model for all freedom struggles, however, ignored the possibility that efforts seeking other dimensions of liberty, such as gender equality, might offer rebels greater room for maneuvering within the current system.

In a broader sense, Goldman's advocacy of gender and sexual freedom aligned with her circle's support for libertarian pedagogies and artistic modernism. We might interpret each of these campaigns as efforts to resist what, following the French theorist Michel Foucault, are now often referred to as disciplinary modes of power. Anarchists challenged the right of clergy, doctors, lawyers, and politicians to define which physical acts and romantic attachments were recognized as moral, healthy, and legal (and thereby, *normal*) and which ones were to be shunned, shamed, and punished as *abnormal*.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, the defense of modernist styles of art challenged the authority of art academies to pronounce realistic representation and bourgeois subject matter to be the only acceptable—and therefore economically viable—measures of achievement.

Following the 1913 Armory Show, reviewers routinely described modernist painting and sculpture as "perverse" and "degenerate" art—precisely the

same medicalizing and moralizing discourse applied to homosexuals and anarchists themselves.<sup>130</sup> Such uses of expert knowledge to classify, distinguish, and privilege certain people and practices over others constituted a different, somewhat more subtle, technique for exerting power than the techniques anarchists had tended to discuss—namely, that of policemen bringing wooden truncheons to bear on the skulls of striking workers. By beginning to explore the ways social domination is reproduced psychologically and in the realm of implicit and explicit cultural norms, then, this sector of the movement was broadening, rather than narrowing, the struggle against oppressive forms of coercive authority.

Anarchists had traditionally seen power as something exercised by people outside of the anarchist community. The turn to matters of gender and sexuality, however, led some to reconsider their relations with their parents, spouses, and comrades. The Italian American anarcha-feminist Titi, for example, asserted in 1906 that “the axiom of domination begins at birth when a girl learns her place in life.” Such thinking led Camillo Di Sciullo to remark to his comrades: “Don’t you know that the first campaign to do is that of the family? Build a little anarchist world within your family and you will be able to see how it strengthens, how it becomes easier to launch other campaigns!”<sup>131</sup> The idea that anarchists would need to alter their own behavior, and that the movement should function as a model of the future anarchist society, became increasingly prominent as the century wore on. Such ideas, when followed to their logical conclusion, contributed new cracks in the foundational belief that a fast-approaching revolution would usher in a realm of freedom in near-millennial fashion.

Though shortsighted in some ways, Kelly’s critique did presciently warn against the tendency, which grew later in the century, for some purported anarchists to simply live their own lives in as free a fashion as their social status allowed (as “bohemians,” “dropouts,” or “punks”) without investing themselves in struggles to create lasting structural transformations that would increase security and life options for the least well off. He thereby acknowledged the challenges of establishing a coalition of political actors who inhabit different social positions through use of a few broad watchwords, such as *freedom*.<sup>132</sup>

In summary, the first fifteen years of the twentieth century represented a period of great dynamism for the anarchist movement in the United States. It reached a numerical zenith in these years, owing significantly to the organizing vehicle provided by the IWW. Drawing on new intellectual resources,

anarchists also began to broaden their understanding of power and their critique of existing society. The demographic composition of the movement began to change accordingly, as middle class and wealthy individuals became involved. Anarchists also added cultural transformation, or “culture war,” to their strategic repertoires, which had previously been limited to syndicalism and insurrectionism. Whereas nineteenth-century anarchists had developed noncommercial folk countercultures within their ethnic communities (and in their native languages), early-twentieth-century anarchists began to engage in the realm of high culture. Their intellectual collaborations with artists who explicitly arrayed themselves against bourgeois values set the stage for the succession of revolutionary avant-garde cultural movements that shaped the twentieth-century Left in fundamental ways. In retrospect, however, the new directions U.S. anarchists began exploring appear to constitute something of a false start.

The diversity of language groups, class backgrounds, issues, and strategies at play in the Progressive Era presented significant obstacles to movement coherency and unity of action. More immediately, the outbreak of the First World War provided an opportunity for the anarchists’ many opponents to engage in an all-out effort to crush them. Losing some of its most innovative thinkers to exile, and facing a series of domestic and international crises, the anarchist movement retreated from its prewar engagements with gender, sexuality, and art. These would not become vital to anarchist politics again until the mid-1940s.