

Introduction

Anarchism Then and Now

The state is not only a constellation of bureaucratic and coercive institutions but a state of mind and a set of social relationships. This anarchist insight serves as a central theme in my study of three major avant-garde sculptors who were actively opposed to the state: Jacob Epstein (1880–1959), Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916), and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915). In my consideration of these artists and their ideological allies, I will demonstrate the myriad ways in which the medium of sculpture was treated as integral to a radical movement whose participants saw the arts as a catalyst for a new set of social relations and psychological dispositions deemed antithetical to those propagated by the state.

Why did these sculptors express sympathy for or even claim allegiance to anarchism, and how did that ideology impact their artistic production and aesthetic theories during the years leading up to World War I? In some ways their individual attraction to anarchism should come as no surprise for in the Americas and Europe, before the sudden rise to prominence of Bolshevism in 1918, anarchism was the politics of choice among the avant-gardes, and the movement has continued to attract notable artists to the present day. Scholars in the fields of history, literature, and art history have charted the significant impact of anarchism on such luminaries as Guillaume Apollinaire, Hugo Ball, André Breton,

Alfred Jarry, James Joyce, Stéphane Mallarmé, F. T. Marinetti, Ezra Pound, Herbert Read, Arthur Rimbaud, and Oscar Wilde as well as on such prominent artists as Hans Arp, Carlo Carrà, Gustave Courbet, Marcel Duchamp, Robert Henri, Wassily Kandinsky, František Kupka, Maximilien Luce, Kazimir Malevich, Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, Man Ray, Alexander Rodchenko, Paul Signac, Alfred Stieglitz, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Maurice de Vlaminck.¹ This fragmentary list (which omits the substantial impact of anarchism on the avant-garde during and after World War II) can be supplemented by self-identified anarchist artists who contributed graphic material and agitational cartoons to the anarchist cause during that same period—notable examples in France alone include Aristide Delannoy, Jules-Félix Grandjouan, and Théophile Steinlen.² To date, art historians of European modernism have focused almost exclusively on the link between anarchism and avant-garde artists engaged in painting and the graphic arts; this book will further enrich that discourse by considering the role of avant-garde sculpture.³ In doing so I will show how, to varying degrees, the subject matter, forms, and materials chosen by Boccioni, Epstein, and Gaudier-Brzeska contributed to the anarchist import of their production. Concurrently I will examine the plurality of types of anarchism impacting these artists and their allies and, when pertinent, the reciprocal influence of the avant-garde on anarchist ideologues allied to the modernist movement. I will also address the inspirational role played by the work

of these sculptors in the development of anarchist art criticism and the function of anarchist ideology in these artists' divergent visions of an imagined audience for their sculpture. My analysis of the centrality of anarchism for an understanding of their art therefore examines the function of ideology not only as an inter-related network of concepts and ideas but as a constellation of beliefs and values shaping both their lives and their innovative artistic praxes.

As Carl Levy shows, anarchists during the nineteenth century were unique in promoting an antistatist concept of cosmopolitanism premised on theories of federalism, supranationality, and decentralization.⁴ He identifies anarchism as constituting “an alternative form of modernity” developed in response to the forces of capitalism, centralization, and globalization that accompanied the spread of capitalism and Western imperial expansion following the French Revolution.⁵ The majority of anarchism's nineteenth-century protagonists found asylum “in safe cosmopolitan ‘cities of refuge,’” such as Paris and London, as well as in “the circuits of imperial power (formal and informal), especially in port cities,” including such far-flung locales as Tokyo and Melbourne.⁶ Levy points to the anarchist syndicalists' promotion of transnational worker solidarity as one manifestation of such globalization and draws attention to the role of culture in the establishment of these bonds, noting that such “cosmopolitan circuits” included “anarchist bohémias—artistic spaces in major cosmopolitan cities central to post-impressionist art and modernist poetry.”⁷ Within such radical circles, the

self-educated mingled with the formally trained, and cross-class alliances were formed. The informality of anarchist organization also meant that places such as clubs, cafés, pubs, and private homes were the loci where radical artists, workers, and ideologues often interacted.⁸ Anarchist journals were major literary and artistic venues for these artists, whose work appeared alongside tracts in anarchist theory; advertisements for anarchist discussion groups and forums; summaries of the monthly content of allied journals in Europe, Asia, and the Americas; and daily news chronicling anarchist activities around the globe.⁹ This transnational scope was augmented by the existence of radical expatriate “colonies” in urban centers on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁰ Recent studies examining the fin de siècle influx of French and Italian anarchists to London and cosmopolitan anarchist communities in Milan, New York, and Paris have charted the impact of anarchism on cultural circles within such urban centers, as well as the cross-Channel and transatlantic links forged by these radicals.¹¹ Historian Constance Bantman concludes that political exile, combined with widespread activism among these radical groups, means that by the early 1900s anarchists had established relations around the globe, allowing the movement’s participants to nurture international contacts and engage in a lively exchange of ideas, strategies, and coordinated demonstrations across international borders and overseas.¹² For instance, when the Spanish government executed the anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer in October 1909 on trumped-up charges, the international anarchist

community organized a series of mass protests and strike actions throughout Europe and the Americas and embarked on a printed and graphic arts campaign that cast Ferrer as a martyr to the anarchist cause.¹³

This fluid migration of individuals had a parallel in the itinerant lives of many among the politicized avant-garde. The multilingual Gaudier-Brzeska moved from Paris to London in 1911 in part to avoid compulsory military service, and Epstein grew up among radicals in New York City’s Jewish quarter before migrating to Paris and then London in 1905. Boccioni embarked on an art career in Rome (1898–1906), where he immersed himself in the writings of such anarchists as Mikhail Bakunin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, before settling in the working-class outskirts of Milan in 1907, when those industrialized suburbs were epicenters of anarchist activity in Italy.¹⁴ All three sculptors interacted with anarchist circles while residing in these urban centers at a time when the international movement was at its height. These sculptors embraced a diverse range of philosophical and tactical concepts grouped under the anarchist banner, and they were active agents in the transformation and development of anarchist ideology and aesthetics.

My opening chapter is devoted to the official censorship in 1912 of Epstein’s celebrated *Tomb of Oscar Wilde* for obscenity, following its installation in Paris’s Père Lachaise cemetery. I consider how the anarchist politics of sexual liberation, combined with Epstein’s awareness of Wilde’s own brand of anarchist individualism, influenced his design for the tomb as well as the key role played

by members of the Paris-based anarchist collective Action d'art in marshaling public support for the monument. I argue that Epstein's early friendship with the American anarchist Emma Goldman alerted him to the anarchist politics of sexual liberation and to Wilde's own status as an outspoken anarchist, which inspired Epstein to address Wilde's politicized sexuality in his evolving plans for the monument. Such radicalism set the stage for Epstein's strategic alliance in 1913 with the Action d'art group, whose main theorist, André Colomer, forged a heady synthesis of Wilde's anarchist aestheticism, the doctrine of individualist "egoism" espoused by the German philosopher Max Stirner, and the theory of intuition developed by the renowned French philosopher Henri Bergson. This conjoining of sexual liberation, martyrdom, and aestheticized individualism cast the *Tomb* as both a symbol of resistance to governmental authority and a pilgrimage site for commemorative mourning and celebration among anarchist and homosexual communities. The state of mind that would condemn Epstein's sculpture as obscene is here challenged by a counterdiscourse that denounced the policing of sexuality and called for new psychological and social relations, premised on Wilde's own anarchism.

In chapter 2 I address the integral relation of anarchism to the sculptural theory and praxis of the Italian futurist Boccioni, with special attention to the series of striding male nudes he exhibited in Paris and London in 1913 and 1914, culminating in his most famous work, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. While Boccioni

worked on these sculptures, he simultaneously drafted his book-length manifesto, *Pittura scultora futurista (Dinamismo plastico)*, in which he announced his antidemocratic and futurist fusion of anarchism and imperialism.¹⁵ Here Boccioni politicizes his embrace of Bergson's antirationalist concept of intuition by condemning rationality as the philosophical underpinning of parliamentary democracy. He links the intuitive sensations of "plastic drama" and sublimity integral to his artistic process in sculpting *Unique Forms* to a notion of aestheticized violence that he and futurist chief Marinetti associate with the male-gendered "revolutionary spirit" they see as integral to the ultranationalism espoused by the anarchist-syndicalist Georges Sorel. In this context, Boccioni and Marinetti celebrated the direct-action tactics of "propaganda by the deed" undertaken by the lone anarchist assassin, the restive anarchist syndicalists engaged in coordinated strike action, and, surprisingly, the heroism and militant esprit de corps of soldiers engaged in imperial conquest. This chapter shows how Boccioni treated the futurist *stato d'animo* as a cultural and political extension of this Sorelian program by integrating the subject matter, material, and formal properties of his sculptures with his homosocial, imperious vision of aestheticized violence.

The last two chapters consider the complex development of Gaudier-Brzeska, from his early life as an impoverished, aspiring artist in Paris in 1910 to his emergence as a self-styled anarchist antimilitarist following his move to London in 1911 and to his collaboration beginning in the summer of 1913 with the celebrated poet-critic

Pound. That alliance culminated in Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska joining forces with fellow avant-gardist Wyndham Lewis in founding the London-based vorticist movement in 1914 and the journal *Blast* (1914–15). Gaudier-Brzeska's anarchist roots also account for his calculated self-fashioning during his London phase as an impoverished street tough or "Apache": a violent, mythic persona adopted by many avant-gardists as a symbol of their Bohemian revolt against bourgeois ethics and propriety. Like Epstein and Boccioni, Gaudier-Brzeska based his anarchist revolt on psychological and sociological premises keyed to a rejection of values and mores encoded in the laws of the state. But he went further during his vorticist phase by developing a sophisticated anarchist critique of a group of sculptors championed by the British government's premier cultural institution, the Royal Academy. Together with Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska merged the tenets of Anglo-French anarchist antimilitarism, Bergsonian intuition, Sorelian syndicalism, and Stirner's extreme individualism into a radical theory of aesthetic and sculptural nominalism. His surprising small-scale, handheld sculptures, designed for specific individuals, nurture such anarchist nominalism through their roles as catalysts for interpersonal bonds among a small community of like-minded egoists. Gaudier-Brzeska's *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound* (April 1914) is the most comprehensive expression of this radical aesthetic, combining direct carving and primitivist subject matter in a transgressive celebration of Pound's sexuality, Gaudier-Brzeska's long-standing anarchist anticolonialism,

and both men's pointed opposition to the cultural politics of British imperialism then on triumphant display in the British Museum. Throughout this period, Gaudier-Brzeska's aesthetics and persona evolved in tandem with his exposure to the anarchist movement, marking him as a cosmopolitan rebel responding to ideological developments on both sides of the English Channel.

In my analysis of these various types of anarchism and their myriad syntheses in the hands of the avant-garde, I will use the morphological definition of ideology developed by Michael Freeden, whose linguistic and conceptual approach to ideologies has enabled historians and political scientists to probe their inner dynamics and structural properties.¹⁶ Freeden's methodology allows him not only to account for the flexible interplay between the component parts that make up a given ideology but to address the porous quality of ideologies that, in many cases, share and contest concepts and values fundamental to their respective worldviews. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of language, he holds that ideologies, like languages, convey meaning through "the fundamental structures and patterns of relationship among their components, which in the case of ideologies are a set of interrelated ideas and concepts." Wittgenstein additionally coined the phrase "family resemblances" to observe overlapping characteristics of a special kind among members of the same categorical set.¹⁷ Freeden deploys this linguistic framework to ascertain the fluid evolution of the ideas and concepts that compose a

given ideological tradition. Citing the example of liberalism, he notes that this ideology encompasses “a number of internal variants that shared a range of overlapping as well as distinct properties” and that “different liberalisms shared several features while simultaneously playing host to separate elements.” For instance, all liberalisms seek to promote individuality as one of their core concepts, yet some can be divided “over the relative merits of private versus public property.” Furthermore, another unstable component within ideological matrices is the concept of morality, which, as we shall see, was part of an overlapping but contested discourse among adherents of both liberal democracy and anarchism.¹⁸ Far from being static and “monolithic,” the structure of an ideology is instead made up of interrelated components whose arrangement relative to one another is in constant flux, allowing them “to be recast as engines of change and renewal, not just as unbending instruments of dominance.”¹⁹

Anarchy derives from the Greek word *anarkhia*, which means “contrary to authority” or “without a ruler,” signaling opposition to all forms of representation, governmental or otherwise, as the means by which social hierarchies are generated. Such resistance encompasses a rejection of the centralization of power in the guise of institutions or other forms of organization, whether economic or political. By contrast anarchists call for the creation of nonhierarchical relationships and modes of socioeconomic organization that would maximize individual freedom for the self as well as others.²⁰ With regard to the anarchist tradition, the ideologues, critics, and artists

I study here were shaped by four ideological variants: anarchist individualism, anarchist communism, anarchist syndicalism, and anarchist antimilitarism. These actors in turn reenvisioned these conceptual frames by combining notions of individualism, collectivity, sexuality, and ethical violence derived from these variants in shifting combinations. By examining the differing degrees to which these artists and their critical allies creatively combined the ideological variants, contested their legitimacy, or integrated them into their artistic and life praxis, I will show how culture as shaped by these avant-gardists was itself an expression of anarchist theory and values.

I will also draw on recent theoretical approaches to anarchism to highlight the manner in which that ideology’s so-called classical forms—which went into steep decline following the movement’s bitter defeat in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39)—were combined in these circles with concepts, ideas, and strategies usually associated with contemporary anarchist praxis. Such a merger runs counter to a current discourse within anarchist theory that draws a sharp distinction between traditional and contemporary anarchism, as well as between their respective cultural manifestations. Advocates of this position frequently use the term “postanarchism” to indicate the libertarian dimension of their philosophical outlooks, while signaling their break from what Lewis Call refers to as the defining feature of “classical” anarchism, namely an embrace of “modern rationalism and modern concepts of subjectivity,” most predominantly “the rational Cartesian self.”²¹ I will join a number of

activists and scholars who have argued that many of the tenets associated with postanarchism had antecedents in the thinking of an older generation of anarchists and that the historical movement was not nearly as grounded in humanist assumptions as postanarchists have presumed to date.²²

In drawing a contrast between historical and contemporary anarchist praxis, theorists and historians of anarchism frequently point to the replacement of unions and federations as modes of organization by what Uri Gordon perceptively refers to as “networks” of collectives or “affinity groups.”²³ These self-styled affinity groups take their inspiration from the Spanish anarchists’ *grupos de afinidad*, which were active as part of the Iberian Anarchist Federation during the Spanish Civil War. Such groups originally emerged among libertarian circles in nineteenth-century Spain, usually consisting of four to twenty members joined by bonds of loyalty, friendship, shared values, and ethics. Such cellular structures and camaraderie made the *grupos* largely impervious to police infiltration. Chris Ealham in his study of anarchism in Catalonia describes such groups as “committed to raising consciousness and structuring everyday life according to libertarian principles,” as well as prizing “the attributes of individual rebellion and heroism, generating a culture of resistance to the work ethic and daily rituals of capitalist society.” The more erudite of these groups were active participants in bohemia, meeting in bookshops, cafés, theaters, and bars and intermingling with other marginalized minorities, such as the Romani. The *grupos* also signaled their rebellion by adopting names

such as *Los Desheredados* (The disinherited) and *Los Indomables* (The uncontrollables).²⁴ As Jesse Cohn notes, their more recent counterparts have played a major role in today’s global anticapitalist movement by privileging “immediacy over the slower deliberative processes of organizations.”²⁵ Such groups are by consensus not only small and autonomous; they are, to quote Gordon, composed “of anarchists closely familiar with each other who come together to undertake a specific action—whether in isolation or collaboration with other affinity groups.”²⁶ Richard Day, in his pioneering book championing affinity, lends further nuance to Gordon’s summary by describing those engaged in such “living affinity-based relationships” as self-reflexively “working against those whose practices perpetuate division, domination and exploitation.”²⁷ Affinity groups are usually described as enacting specific forms of direct action, such as demonstrations or targeted attacks on particular institutions. Under these circumstances, participants take up precise roles, “form a self-sufficient unit, plan their action down to the smallest details, and look out after each other on the streets.”²⁸ Whereas an affinity group constitutes an ad hoc, ephemeral formation, a “collective” in contemporary anarchist theory designates a more permanent group but one still defined in terms of small-scale, interpersonal “face-to-face ‘membership.’” Such collectives undertake any number of tasks—they may be “a land-based collective operating an agricultural commune, an editorial collective of an anarchist publication,” or “a collective running a particular campaign or research activity,” with the formation of affinity groups as

a strategic offshoot of such efforts.²⁹ Thus anarchist concepts of unmediated affinity call for a profound degree of interpersonal understanding, self-reflexive behavior, and positive affectivity between participants: a state of mind deemed antithetical to that propagated by the state.

Such affinity formations are also crucial to the creation of local networks within a single city, which can generate “a decentralized global network of communication, coordination and mutual support among countless nodes of social struggle, overwhelmingly lacking formal membership or fixed boundaries.”³⁰ While Gordon joins other anarchists in celebrating the role of the internet in facilitating this Deleuzian model of network-formation, he maintains that the ties holding such macronetworks together begin with “the primary affinities of face-to-face groups and collectives, extending through the dense web of personal connections and virtual nodes to form an international context for cooperation and solidarity.”³¹ Large-scale actions, occasional conferences, and online communication help to foster group-identity formations structured around such affinities. In a gesture toward the field of sociology, Gordon describes this extended notion of affinity as akin to “tribal solidarity,” wherein the feeling of trust granted to core members of a small-scale affinity group is extended “to perceived members of one’s extended family or tribe.” In such instances, writes Gordon, the “feeling of identification, and the mutuality and reciprocity it motivates, is premised on shared cultures of resistance and visions for social change.” For example, when foreign activists

encounter one another for the first time, “familiarity is often probed through the presence of various cultural indicators of one’s background and political orientation.” Such subcultural codes assure that solidarity exists as a potential “that can be actualized selectively, destabilizing boundaries of membership and non-membership.”³²

This concept of affinity as a baseline for the contemporary development of collectives and networks arguably had a precedent in the transnational relationships fostered by “classical” anarchist collectives under the auspices of journals and study groups. Anarchist journals and newspapers were major forums for such network-building on local, regional, national, and global scales. Bantman, in a groundbreaking study of the series of fin de siècle anarchist communist journals edited by the French anarchist and shoemaker Jean Grave, has drawn on the sociological concept of “relational activism” as a supplement to that of affinity groups to describe the function of journals and newspapers in fostering informal links among the far-flung anarchist community.³³ Instead of considering social actors as “pre-formed entities who act rationally in specific situations,” relational thought places an emphasis on the building of interpersonal connections, rather than “the transformational processes they induce.”³⁴ Such relationship-building can therefore be seen as a form of activism in itself. Grave, in his role as editor of the anarchist communist journals *Le Révolté* (1879–85), *La Révolte* (1887–97), and *Les Temps nouveaux* (1895–1914; new series, 1919–21), operated “as a network node and organizer,” publishing translations of

anarchist texts from foreign-language publications, correspondence from around the globe, and surveys of labor news from Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Bantman perceptively describes Grave as an “immobile transnationalist,”³⁵ whose global links were formed through friendship networks facilitated by anarchists themselves itinerant and eager to keep Grave abreast of unfolding developments beyond the borders of France. One such *compagnon d'exil* was Peter Kropotkin, who had cofounded *Le Révolté* during his exile in Geneva and maintained close contact with Grave following his expulsion to England in the mid-1880s; there he cofounded the London-based journal *Freedom* in 1888 as an allied publication to *La Révolte* and *Les Temps nouveaux*. Grave himself anticipated the concept of the affinity group by describing his editorial role as establishing “the greatest possible number of relations between groups and individuals, as long as those relations are spontaneous, direct, and unmediated.”³⁶ The anarchist journals under study here, including *L'Action d'art*, *La Demolizione*, *La Guerre sociale*, *Les Hommes du jour*, the *Syndicalist*, the *New Freewoman*, and the *Egoist*, actively fostered comparable global networks, with varying conceptions of affinity at the core of their organizational development.

In fin de siècle Britain, anarchist affinity had its equivalent in what Leela Gandhi calls “affective communities,” wherein marginalized groups promoting countercultural, revolutionary practices forged anticolonialist networks on the basis of a “politics of friendship,” actively opposed to the restrictive bonds dictated by patriotic, ethnic,

or national identity. Gandhi notes that, despite their differences, these “Christian socialists, anarchists, New Lifers, suffragists, vegetarians, prison and land reformers all attended each others’ meetings, contributed to each others’ journals, and organized joint demonstrations.”³⁷ Protagonists included the homosexual reformer and utopian socialist Edward Carpenter, the aesthete Oscar Wilde, and the Jewish spiritualist Mirra Alfassa, among others. What these communities shared was an opposition to the British state’s mediating role as an institution fabricating social and psychic boundaries that served to reinforce an imperialist mindset and divisions between the colonizers and colonized. Although she only briefly discusses the anarchist component of this anticolonial matrix, her study points to a key strength of the anarchist movement, namely its ability to forge ties with other dissident causes by virtue of its overtly politicized concept of affectivity. Gandhi cites the London-based anarchist Kropotkin as among the most vocal in calling for the creation of such cross-cultural, anticolonial forms of “non-governmental sociality.”³⁸

While the term “affinity group” is frequently used to designate modes of anarchist organization, Gordon, drawing on Freedman, defines contemporary anarchism as animated by three “first order clusters of concepts”: “domination, pre-figurative politics and diversity/open endedness.”³⁹ With regard to domination, Gordon holds that today’s anarchists differ from their predecessors in their “generalization of the target of anarchist resistance from the state and capitalism to all forms of domination in society.” He includes

“radical feminist, ecological, antiracist and queer struggles” under this rubric, noting that contemporary anarchism “is rooted in the convergence” of these ongoing battles.⁴⁰ Thus today’s anarchists not only recognize the oppression of rural and urban workers, they address the subjugation of ethnic and racial minorities, colonized peoples, and those of diverse gender and sexual orientations. Domination now “serves as a generic concept of various systematic features of society whereby groups and persons are controlled, exploited, humiliated, discriminated against,” the dynamics of which “anarchists seek to uncover, challenge, and erode.”⁴¹

“Prefigurative politics” refers to the anarchists’ self-conscious attempts to integrate the movement’s principles into the very means through which they seek to bring about an anarchist society. The goals to be achieved fundamentally shape the means employed to achieve those ends.⁴² Advocates of prefiguration draw a distinction between what they refer to as a politics of demand, wherein politicized constituencies make demands of power holders, and a prefigurative politics of the act, which takes direct action aimed at creating change in the unfolding present, without deference to such power holders. For practitioners of prefigurative politics, the struggle for social change is not defined in terms of a macroscale horizon event—such as a cataclysmic revolution—but rather as a form of present-tense micropolitics, built up incrementally “from below” and premised on changing one’s own behavior and interpersonal interactions. Prefigurative anarchism is thus a politics of anticipation

or hope, calling for actors to initiate social change through what Day refers to as “disengagement and reconstruction, rather than reform or revolution,” in order to build a new society “in the shell of the old.”⁴³

Gordon sees this move as “a broadening of the idea of direct action, resulting in a commitment to define and realize anarchist social relations within the activities and collective structures of the revolutionary movement itself.” On an organizational level, such thinking calls for the creation of nonhierarchical, antiauthoritarian structures and “the effort to create and develop horizontal functioning in any collective action setting, and to maintain constant awareness of interpersonal dynamics and the way they might reflect social patterns of exclusion.” Gordon terms such organizations “constructive” forms of direct action wherein the systematic negation of modes of domination in interpersonal affairs and the establishment of affinity groups and collectives built around such anarchist precepts effectively erode and undermine systems of dominance, such as capitalism and the state.⁴⁴ In this regard, contemporary anarchists draw inspiration from Gustav Landauer’s anarchist definition of the state as a dynamic set of relations:

A table can be overturned and a window can be smashed. However, those who believe that the state is also a thing or a fetish that can be overturned or smashed are sophists and believers in the Word. The state is a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to each other. It can be destroyed by creating

new social relationships; by people relating to one another differently. The absolute monarch said: I am the state. We, who have imprisoned ourselves in the absolute state, must realize the truth: *we* are the state! And we will be the state . . . as long as we have not yet created the institutions necessary for a true community and a true society of human beings.⁴⁵

Landauer's astute analysis complements the writings of historical anarchists through his critique of those mindsets identified as instruments for the establishment of state authority and power. Such tools included concepts of an unchanging human essence, which these anarchists dismissed as an abstraction, antithetical to their project of self-transformation and mutual, nonhierarchical empowerment. Kropotkin, who railed against Hegelian concepts of human essence, grounded his assessment of human behavior in empirical observation and experience, viewing our conduct as socially constructed and consequently open to radical change.⁴⁶ André Colomer, Georges Sorel, and Dora Marsden all shared this skepticism, which inspired Colomer and Marsden's embrace of Stirner's radical conception of the "self-dissolving ego," while Sorel marshaled the same skepticism in his antirationalist critique of the Enlightenment subject.⁴⁷ Rather than focusing exclusively on the question "What is our nature?," these anarchists were actively concerned with how we transform ourselves. Epstein, Boccioni, and Gaudier-Brzeska joined their ideological allies in challenging the social conventions,

values, ideals, and mores actively propagated by the state as a psychological complement to their opposition to the state's exercise of institutional power, cultural and political but also sexual and racial. By folding such issues as colonialism and homosexuality into their critique of the state, they partially anticipated contemporary anarchists' conceptual approach to domination.

Gordon's reformulation of the anarchist conception of domination and definition of prefigurative politics as "constructive direct action" based on the integration of the ends into the means adds a third conceptual cluster: "diversity and open-endedness."⁴⁸ This concept seeks to answer the question "What are anarchists for?" and in Gordon's estimation the contemporary anarchists' response parted ways from their predecessors. This divergence is because anarchists before World War II actively attempted to spell out their vision for a new society free of hierarchies and regimes of domination, which led to "fierce disagreements between proponents of anarchist communism, collectivism, mutualism, and so on." By contrast, today's anarchists lack any expectation of revolutionary closure and see no need to lay out competing blueprints for a new social order. Gordon attributes this change to "the rise of diversity as a core anarchist value," resulting in "an endorsement of pluralism and heterogeneity in anarchist approaches to liberation."⁴⁹ Anarchists today thus engage in prefigurative politics in order to transform everyday life, with no expectation of a generalized social transformation. Instead they focus on lived reality "as a present-tense activity of

individual and collective self-liberation,” declaring that “the revolution is now.” This “imperfect and present-tense experiment in alternative social relations” promotes “anarchy as culture, as a lived reality that pops up everywhere in new guises, adapts to different cultural climates,” and is developed “experimentally for its own sake, whether or not we believe it can become, in some sense, a prevailing mode in society.”⁵⁰ This description partially characterizes the project of the radical artists I study here, who reimagined anarchist ideology within the prefigurative contours of their subcultural groups, art criticism, and sculptural praxes, even as they incorporated this strategic orientation within the frame of traditional anarchist ideologies positing models for a postrevolutionary society.

In sum, this book delineates a politicized history of avant-garde sculpture with a focus on the complex role of anarchist ideology within that matrix. These artists’ sculptural processes, choices of subject matter, and materials were shaped by anarchist ideology and were calculated to generate certain affective responses—states of mind—in hopes of fostering a radical community. Proper understanding of this dimension of anarchism entails an analysis of the function of emotional dispositions such as joy, paroxysm, drama, heroism, humor, and sublimity within these discourses and the role of art in conveying, shaping, and augmenting their ideological significance. In this light, I consider the issue of *visual* representation in view of the anarchists’ hostility to other forms of representation as discursive forms of mediation, disrupting the direct-action

politics celebrated by the movement. The anarchists under consideration all endorsed Bergson’s philosophy precisely because Bergson pitted his theory of intuitive immediacy against more abstract forms of mediation, while claiming that intuition allowed artists and thinkers to develop fluid modes of representation expressive of the dynamic creativity integral to duration in all its manifestations. Bergson lauded artists’ creative processes precisely because their art, whether in the form of music, poetry, prose, painting, or sculpture, is able both to represent an artist’s intuition and to awaken the intuitive consciousness of an artist’s audience. Bergson casts this dichotomy in terms of a contrast between intellectual abstraction and intuitive insight. His anarchist interpreters transformed that discourse into a blistering critique of representative state governance in the name of self-transformation and intuitive insurrection. In the process, these anarchists harnessed these rebellious states of mind in a systematic campaign against the emotional regimes propagated by the state, whether in the guise of patriotism, loyalty to an army, respect for the police as well as military, clerical and judicial institutions, or adherence to marital laws and state-sanctioned heterosexuality.⁵¹ Thus the emotional dispositions, utterances, and acts deployed by these anarchists had the aspirational function of transforming the self and those to whom such dispositions, utterances, and acts were potentially addressed. With this context in mind, I will address how anarchist praxis and ideology relate to the creative process and reception of the sculptural works analyzed in this book.

Finally, I will consider how notions of violence operated within these avant-garde and anarchist circles, focusing on the way in which later adherents of a fifth anarchist variant—that of anarchist pacifism—critiqued recourse to violence as a key contributor to the failure of the anarchist project in the wake of the Spanish Civil War.⁵² Anarchists, and many among their avant-garde allies before 1914, endorsed violence as an ethical response to what they saw as the intrinsic injustice of state-sponsored violence. In responding to the rise of fascism in Europe and the outbreak of World War II, key anarchists in Britain and the United States reevaluated the efficacy of violence and forged a new theory of pacifist nonviolent resistance, premised on a prefigurative critique

of the recourse to violence as a revolutionary strategy.⁵³ In the book's conclusion, I turn to the case of one such activist/theorist, the prominent anarchist George Woodcock (1912–1995), whose wartime essays critiquing violence were the springboard for a paradigm-shifting vision of anarchist aesthetics premised on these emerging pacifist ideals.⁵⁴ This discussion, I hope, makes a modest contribution to the larger project of charting the history of emotions, while defining a qualitative transformation that served to distinguish the anarchist movements studied here from the version of prefigurative anarchism that rose to prominence in Britain and the United States during the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁵